

---

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

---

THE ELLIOTT SCHOOL  
OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

---

THE INSTITUTE FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

IMES CAPSTONE PAPER SERIES

IS A BOMBER JUST A BOMBER? A MULTILEVEL ANALYSIS OF  
WOMEN SUICIDE BOMBERS<sup>1</sup>

CARA BEINING  
KARI EVANS

APRIL 2014

THE INSTITUTE FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES  
THE ELLIOTT SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

© OF CARA BEINING AND KARI EVANS, 2014

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
A Note on Terms.....	5
Defining the Problem.....	9
Methodology.....	12
<b>I. THE GLOBAL TREND.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>II. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS.....</b>	<b>22</b>
Palestine.....	25
Iraq.....	28
The Role of the Environment.....	30
<b>III. ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL.....</b>	<b>32</b>
Hamas.....	34
Al-Qaeda in Iraq.....	40
Role of the Organization.....	46
<b>IV: INDIVIDUAL LEVEL.....</b>	<b>49</b>
Examples from Palestine.....	52
Examples from Iraq.....	56
Role of the Individual.....	58
<b>V. CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>60</b>
The Big Picture.....	60
Recommendations.....	62
<b>APPENDIX I .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>APPENDIX II.....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>APPENDIX III.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>INTERVIEWS.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>DATABASES.....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>83</b>

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Our research would not have been possible without the generous support of the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University. We would especially like to thank our advisor, Rhea Siers, for her invaluable time and insight. She makes for a great cheerleader, even throughout a tough subject like female suicide bombing.

We extend our deepest gratitude to those who provided us with interviews and primary sources in Tel Aviv as well as the scholars interviewed here in the U.S. Additionally, we appreciate the assistance of Dr. Marc Lynch for his guidance and feedback throughout the project and our graduate studies. Lastly we must thank our friends, family and cats (Bella & Peeshe) for their continued love and patience.

## INTRODUCTION

Halfway through a National Geographic documentary entitled, “Female Suicide Bombers: Dying to Kill,” host Lisa Ling walks into a girls school in the Gaza Strip to hear from those students gathered around her on their views of local female martyrs.<sup>2</sup> She asks the crowd, aged 14-16, whether or not these women would explode themselves in defense of their homeland? Every hand was raised: “Inshallah, if we had the chance, of course!...Death is normal for us, every day we see blood in front of us.” Ling prods further: “But what does it mean...when so many innocent people are killed, is that ok?” A girl near the camera responds, “Yes but you do not see the Palestinians, they are in their homes, in their house. All over Rafah they are killed in their house!” Another young student responds, “Yes, but imagine that your sister or mother or your father is dead in the front of your eyes, what are you going to do then? You will be silent? No, of course you will do something, give up anything. Even if it is your soul.”

Television programs, magazine articles and journalistic stories produced on the subject of women suicide bombers have grown over the past decade, perhaps partly because the tactic has become more widespread, but also because the dramatic, sensationalized nature of the topic is a sure way to attract an audience. However as academics, what should be the focus our studies? Should psychologists devote their time to assessing the mental state of individual girls, like those featured in the documentary above? Or should intelligence analysts track the terrorist organizations which perpetrate such acts? How can the environmental makeup of Palestine-- its people, religion and society-- account for the popularity of women bombers? Where should those looking to counter or halt such acts target in their work?

Some of the most striking examples of overly dramatized and even sexualized news headlines and academic articles’ titles alike include: “Suicide sisterhood”—“Messengers of

Death”—“The unlikely terrorist”—“Explosive Baggage”—“Unnatural Beings”—“Dressed to Kill”—“The Bomb under the Abaya”—“Bombshells”—“Terror’s ‘invisible women.’” As leading scholar on the subject, Mia Bloom commented during her interview, “women’s militancy is evolving; ‘the ‘exploding womb’ has replaced the ‘revolutionary womb.’”<sup>3</sup> ‘Female suicide terrorism’ or ‘women suicide bombers’ is a complex and somewhat convoluted topic that offers dozens of different rabbit holes for the researcher to go down. Although each turn may offer a fascinating story, its utility for policymakers is somewhat limited.

We therefore embarked on our research determined to uncover the relevance of this topic from a pragmatic perspective. Our goal was to sift through the barrage of misinformation, hyperbole, and myths surrounding a trend that has been equally over-exaggerated and under-emphasized. Our objective was to discover if ‘female suicide terrorism’ represented an actual increasing and systematic trend that should represent a focus in US counterterrorism policy—both in the homeland and abroad to protect its strategic interests—and, more important, if gender matters at all. Do women bombers have unique characteristics that should be considered separately in the formulation of policy, or is a bomber simply just a bomber, regardless of the perceived social acceptability of one’s actions over the other.

### **A Note on Terms**

Before delving into the details of our research topic, it is necessary first to clarify the key terms for this subject. We found that the terms we used made a difference, both in how we approached the material and in our cross-data comparisons and analyses. In the proposal and initial research, we relied mainly on the phrase ‘female suicide terrorism’ to describe our topic.

But after conducting interviews with several scholars in the field, and after extensive research, we found a number of problems with this phrase that made it unsuitable for use in our Capstone.

First, the term ‘terrorism’ still lacks any universally accepted definition. As terrorism expert Marc Sageman deftly describes in his book, “most people know what they mean by terrorism, but it is a little like obscenity: people believe they know it when they see it, but cannot define it.”<sup>4</sup> What is generally agreed upon is that terrorism is both a form of political violence and a psychological weapon; it is employed with the aim of affecting some sort of political change. The details of the concept, however, are defined differently from organization to organization, from agency to agency, and from article to article. Feminist international relations scholar Dr. Laura Sjoberg pointed out one distinction is the attribution of “a cause (politics) into the meaning” so that “violence that is politically motivated is terrorism, and violence that is not politically motivated is just a regular, every-day crime.”<sup>5</sup>

Add to that the fact that since the attacks on 9/11, the term ‘terrorism’ has become even more politically charged. Dr. Sjoberg expressed her concern that “the label ‘suicide terrorism’ for example has certain raced, classed, and religious undertones that suggest that the ‘terrorist’ is the constitutive other to the liberal, democratic individual (where the latter is ‘good’ and the former is ‘bad’ even when their behaviors are strikingly similar.)”<sup>6</sup> International security scholar Dr. Lindsey O’Rourke also found there to be a lot of “normative problems associated with defining terrorism.”<sup>7</sup>

So due to the ambiguity of the term and the uncertainties inherent in the concept of terrorism, we decided to remove it from our research. This does not mean that we do not conceive of the acts, or even the organizations, as associated with terrorism. Rather, due to our inability to delineate what terrorism is, and not wanting the added baggage of the term to muddy

our findings, we instead turned to the terms ‘suicide attack’ or ‘suicide bombing’ for the act, and ‘suicide bomber’ and ‘suicide attacker’ for the person.

Defining a suicide attack is also crucial as it carries with it a number of preconditions and requirements that impact our methodology in approaching the topic. First, throughout our research and fieldwork, there was one factor consistently highlighted as necessary for an attack to be considered a suicide attack: the intentional and planned death of the perpetrator. Stevie Weinberg, Director of Operations at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, strongly emphasized that the bomber must knowingly and intentionally kill herself and others in order for the it to be considered a suicide attack; if the bomber is not sure she is going to die, then it is not a suicide bombing.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the fact that many critics point out it is impossible to know if the attacker had the intent to die, we accept the planned death of the perpetrator as a requirement for identifying a suicide attack. We also removed ambiguity from the term by focusing entirely on bombings; we did not include examples of women carrying small arms or attacking with some other weapon in order to die at the hands of security forces. Pushing a detonator for an explosive vest or belt is a deliberate action to bring death to oneself and others.

Yet another issue that came up is whether a suicide attack targets civilians only or also includes military establishments, as this greatly impacts the data included in the study. This issue more has to deal with defining suicide terrorism, as terrorists normally target noncombatants. Since we removed ‘terrorism’ from our phrasing, and since we found that the psychological impact of such an attack still affects the civilian population, we decided to include attacks against military targets in our definition.

Finally, we also had to consider whether or not to include failed attacks in our analyses. The argument from most researchers is that one should distinguish between successful and intercepted attacks, especially in terms of data collection. In some cases, it has been noted that attackers who are apprehended actually might not have intended to carry out the attack. But we found that in order to provide a more cohesive picture in some of the analytic sections, it was better to include some of the failed attackers. We do differentiate between the failed and successful attacks when appropriate.

Thus, our definition of a suicide bomber is that of an individual who willingly intends to sacrifice herself in order to kill as many of the enemy as possible. We do not include small arms attacks, or so called “no-escape attacks” wherein the individual may attack an enemy group with a small knife or handgun, thus ensuring a small possibility for survival. However, we do include attacks on both military establishments and civilians for reasons previously discussed.

One final change we made in our phrase came at the end of our research as we found increasing difficulty with using the phrase ‘female suicide bomber.’ Using the term ‘female’ implies a focus on the sex of the person, rather than the gender. Our interview with Dr. Sjoberg confirmed this belief as she said “the phrase ‘female suicide bombers’ suggest that there is something inherently, essentially, or fundamentally different about ‘female suicide bombers’ than about ‘suicide bombers’ (proper) where the understood descriptor of ‘suicide bombers’ is ‘male.’”<sup>9</sup> It is not solely the biological differences between the sexes that interest us, but rather the gendered categories of men and women in relation to the act of suicide bombing. For that reason, we decided to use the phrase ‘women suicide bombers’ instead. While describing the tactic as ‘a suicide bombing carried out by a woman’ is more verbose, we believe that the terminology better suits our research in general.



Obviously, as we relied on other sources for most of our data, we had to take into account the fact that some had slightly different definitions or different variables in the attacks they listed. This is one of the many reasons that the data varies so much from one set to another, which makes analysis much more difficult. But, as will be explained in the following part, we found it necessary to rely on pre-existing datasets for our analysis of this topic.

### **Defining the Problem**

When starting out with this topic, there were two main questions that we sought to answer. First, is the phenomenon of suicide attacks by women a systematically increasing trend? Is this a trend that is worth studying and looking at to make policy recommendations, or is it just a temporary aberration in terrorist organizations' behavior? Second, do women bombers fundamentally differ from the men? Is there sufficient reason to look at women as a separate sub-category in the field of suicide terrorism?

To find an answer, and in order to better define the problem we are analyzing, there are four main and recurring issues we identified as important through the course of our research. First is the issue of gender norms. Every society has its own set of standards by which it judges human behavior based on gender; these standards can shift over time and can differ from place to place. But, it seems to be a universally accepted norm that women are less violent than men. Women are generally portrayed as nurturers, life-givers, and peace loving. This is despite that the fact that women have been an integral part of terrorist organizations and violent movements throughout history.

The inability of society to see past this norm is problematic for many reasons. The most important of these is that women are generally not viewed as threats by security forces. Not only

did officials fail to anticipate the emergence of female militant actors, but they remain unprepared to deal with the threat. As Jessica Stern pointed out, the official profile of a typical terrorist for many US government agencies applies only to men.<sup>10</sup> Jennifer Hardwick similarly highlighted the fact that the official terrorist profile “remains on a 20 to 30-something Arabic-looking male,” excluding at least half of the population.<sup>11</sup> This is not only something lacking in the national security framework, but in international security as well. In other words, women suicide bombers are essentially invisible nonstate actors, which makes countering that threat all the more difficult.

On a somewhat related note, the second important issue for this topic is the abundant, and somewhat excessive, media coverage of women suicide bombers. Since women’s participation in such violent activity runs counter to gender stereotypes, the media promotes the shock factor associated with these attacks. Reports and stories about women suicide bombers are not only more numerous than those about male terrorists, but also attract more attention from the general public. According to Dr. Mia Bloom, women terrorists draw eight times more media attention than their male counterparts.<sup>12</sup> The dramatization of women suicide bombers and their stories, often embellished with personal details and sad anecdotes, puts a spotlight on the conflict and guarantees greater coverage for the organization orchestrating the attacks. Although we do not want to overemphasize the media factor, it is recognized that the great publicity accorded the women actors does make them more effective propaganda tools than men.

The third important issue is the changing religious discourse that has occurred over the past decade following the (re)introduction of women into the fray. It is generally recognized that women are more active in secular organizations than those with religious leanings, especially the radical religious groups. So it was fascinating to see a complete reversal on the opinion of

women taking part in violent attacks on the part of Islamist leaders in the Middle East; from initial condemnation of such activity as being un-Islamic to establishing precedents for *mujahidat* and asserting the necessity of women to take part in fighting in *jihad*. The way in which this discourse evolved hardened the religiosity of those organizations involved, and strengthened traditional gender roles for women in those societies. This opened the door for other organizations on the Islamist spectrum to begin incorporating this tactic.

This leads to the final major issue of importance: the success of women in this violent role as an impetus for other women to become operationally active in extremist organizations or resistance movements. According to many scholars, the trend of women's involvement in violence is not only increasing, but also expanding. From a brigade of women suicide bombers in Iraq to an all-female combat unit in Syria, the operational capacity for women in such organizations is growing. As the social and religious obstacles in their way are disappearing, and the number of men still available to fill the ranks dwindles, it is only logical to expect more women to become involved on a global scale. Whether or not the increased operational roles allowed women will open up their ability to take part in such movements at a strategic level, however, is still unclear.

From identifying these four main elements of the phenomenon of women suicide bombers, it is clear that it is an important issue and that gender does matter to a certain extent. We deduced that gender matters the most for the organization; in how the group's leaders employs women as operatives as opposed to men. As will be described in the following section on our methods for research, our analysis was based on three levels: the environment, the organization, and the individual. Through the course of our research, we determined that the

organization is the key factor for understanding the trend of women suicide bombers, and for projecting its future.

The organization's strategy to actively recruit and employ women as bombers has great ramifications for the spread of this tactic. This is especially due to the manipulation of ideology that led to the religious justification put in place for women to legitimately take part in violence. The fact that al-Qaeda now expressly allows, and in some cases commands, the active participation of women in violent roles will have a lasting effect on the global jihadi movement, and the groups and individuals influenced by it. Women like Malika el Aroud—aka Umm Obeyda—and Muriel Degauque from Europe, and Colleen Renee LaRose—aka Jihad Jane—in the United States are proof of the widespread influence of the religious ideology on women.

Therefore, our final preliminary conclusion indicates that women will continue to take part in conflict as suicide bombers incrementally. Our empirical analysis allows us to project that there will continue to be spikes and drops in the figures dependent on the overall level of violence, but in a general upward trend. Although the ideology is an important tool used by the organization to recruit or inspire women, it is the organizational strategy that will determine to what extent women are actively used operationally. The organization will also determine to what extent women's operational roles, and possibly strategic roles, are expanded in militant groups. But, it is clear from the research that women combatants represent a progressing and continuing trend in terrorism.

### **Methodology**

The structure of our research is based on a well-developed model in terrorism studies. In order to understand the tactic of suicide bombing, and the role of women in it, we broke down

our analysis into three levels: the environmental level, the organizational level, and the individual level. At the first level, we focused on identifying the socio-political-economic factors and conditions that facilitate the rise of such violence. In the broader literature on terrorism, these factors are often referred to as the ‘root causes’ of terrorism. At the second level, we look at the role of the organization and the factors that led to the growing utilization of women as suicide bombers. The final level of analysis is focused on the individual; it is based more on a psychological approach to understanding why a woman becomes a bomber.

While this approach is frequently employed by scholars and researchers looking at suicide terrorism and women suicide bombers, we found that most would focus solely on one level of analysis. The majority of those writing on women bombers focused on the individual level; due to the fact that such violence counters traditional gender norms, many try to explain what drove women to this activity. The later articles started to shift the focus to the organization, on the benefits they received from such an effective tactic.

Although quite a few pieces on general suicide terrorism included a multilevel approach, only a few such pieces were written about women’s attacks. We concluded that the only way to fully address our research question for this paper was to incorporate all the analytic levels. This way, not only could we determine how women and men differed at each level, but also decide which level was the most important for female militants and what implications that had for policy recommendations.

Included in our multilevel analysis is a set of case studies from the Middle East, which we use for comparative and analytic purposes. The list of organizations that currently utilize women as suicide bombers is still short, but we decided to focus on those who have this tactic most often. Globally, the areas in which suicide attacks are highest include Sri Lanka

(specifically LTTE), Chechnya, Palestine, Iraq, and the Kurdish areas. After extensive research into these regions, we decided to focus on the Palestinian and Iraqi cases.

The Palestinian choice made sense since it had one of the longest histories for this phenomenon and had been written about extensively by experts in the field including Dr. Anat Berko, Yoram Schweitzer, Anne Speckhard, Dr. Mia Bloom, just to name a few. Out of all the Palestinian groups, Hamas was chosen as it had some key examples of women martyrs and played a key role in the evolution of the religious discourse on women. The Iraqi choice also made sense since it had a large number of examples, many of them recent, and because the US had dealt personally with this tactic in this arena. Out of all the groups in the Iraqi insurgency, al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) is not only the largest and most well-organized, but is also recognized as the forerunner in suicide terrorism in the country. AQI and its al-Qaeda affiliates also played a key role in the religious discourse on women in *jihād*.

Both case studies cover the time period most relevant for looking at the phenomenon of suicide attacks by women and the progression of the organization in the course of its related conflict; the first study spans from 1990-2010 while the second study, due to the fact that the organization did not come into existence until the start of the Iraq war in 2003, spans from 2003 to 2010.

Analyzing the case studies of Hamas and AQI provided an interesting comparison. While both organizations are religiously based, Hamas is more of a nationalist organization that relies on religious rhetoric while AQI is an Islamist organization that is part of the larger global jihadi movement. We not only compared how each organization used women as bombers, but also the different ‘Islamisms’ they espouse. Our analysis, therefore, provided important implications for the future of women suicide bombers at the regional level as well as the possibilities for its

expansion at the global level. Both organizations are also important in terms of US policy; while both are designated terrorist organizations, Hamas is more a threat to US strategic interests in the Middle East while AQI is also representative of the larger threat the US faces globally.

On top of our extensive research, we also traveled to Israel in order to speak with some of the most experienced experts who have worked in this field for years. During our short trip, we conducted interviews with four distinguished scholars: Dr. Anat Berko, Retired Colonel and Criminologist and Researcher at the Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT); Yoram Schweitzer, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies; Assaf Mogahdam, Associate Professor at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) and Director of Academic Affairs at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT); and Stevie Weinberg, Director of Operations, Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT). We were also able to read a number of print publications and past Masters or PhD papers while visiting the ICT library in Herzliya. In addition to the interviews conducted in Israel, we also reached out to several scholars in the United States, some of whom eagerly responded to our questions by email.

The organization of the rest of the paper is as follows. Part I provides an analysis of women suicide bombers as global trend. We started with data collection and analysis in order to provide a baseline from which to build the rest of the paper. It is in this section we determine that although there are spikes, the numbers indicate a general upward trend in suicide attacks by women globally and regionally. Part II presents the environmental level of analysis; we discuss the conditions in both Palestine and Iraq that set the context for the phenomenon. From our analysis, we conclude that while the environmental level is important to provide context to the

phenomenon, it is not the key driver behind it, nor does it have significant implications for gender differences.

Part III presents the organizational level of analysis: it includes a breakdown of the organizations of Hamas and AQI, the development of the tactic of suicide attacks by women within both, and the evolution of the religious discourses in both. We conclude that the organization is a key driver of women suicide bombers, and gender is an important distinction, to a certain extent, at this level of analysis. Part IV provides the individual level of analysis, with a focus on the differences in motivations and behavior between the genders. We provide specific examples of women from both case studies, and conclude that although there are obvious differences between men and women at the individual level, it should not be the focus of counterterrorism policy.

The final section, Part V, reviews our findings and provides the overall picture of women suicide bombers based on all the levels of analysis. This is followed by a list of recommendations for US counterterrorism policy.



## I. THE GLOBAL TREND

In order to embark on the study of women suicide bombers at the three levels, it is crucial to first look at the big picture, to get a bird's eye view of the phenomenon before delving into analysis, by looking at the global data. Women have been recruited consistently by a number of different organizations for this particular role: Hezbollah, Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP), Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Chechen rebels, al-Aqsa Martyrs, Palestinian Islamic *Jihad* (PIJ), Hamas, the al-Qaeda network, and Iraqi insurgents.<sup>13</sup>

As Dr. Mia Bloom pointed out, women terrorists are not a new phenomenon: “women have been involved in terrorism for a very long time” and “most terrorist groups include women.”<sup>14</sup> Even the most conservative religious groups have had women members, helping to support the organization in the background. Although the violent role for women in these groups was slow to develop, it has been quick to spread even to Salafi Islamists like al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

Looking at the overall statistics, the number of women suicide bombers is marginal in comparison with men, or even with other tactics. Although their numbers have increased over the years, these women are still rare. Due to this fact, Yoram Schweitzer often stressed that women suicide bombers were only ever a marginal trend.<sup>15</sup> It is generally recognized that between 1985 and 2006, there were about 220 observed women suicide bombers and dozens more who have been arrested in the act. These women represent about 15% of all suicide bombers globally.<sup>16</sup>

Although the record is uneven and still quite small, most researchers agree that the number of women suicide bombers is increasing. Starting with about eight women suicide bombers in the 1980s, this figure has increased to well over 100 since 2000.<sup>17</sup> The peak number

of bombers, both men and women, occurred in the mid to late 2000's when the Iraq War was at its height. Dr. Laura Sjoberg described the trajectory as one that keeps "spiking and then decreasing, though on an upward trend" over the past ten years or so, the most visible being the suicide attacks in the Middle East.<sup>18</sup> Dr. Berko reiterated throughout her interview, "We will see it more and more, more and more."<sup>19</sup> There are some, like Schweitzer and Dr. Lindsey O'Rourke, that maintain women suicide bombings are decreasing or at least not increasing proportionally as compared to men, but this opinion is in the minority.

But, numbers do not tell the whole story and, in fact there are a lot of problems that are faced when looking at details of the statistics available that prevent an accurate analysis. One of the first issues that stands out when researching statistics is that there is no one comprehensive database that is accepted as the leading source of information on the topic of suicide attacks, or terrorism in general. There exists a multitude of databases maintained by a number of universities and institutions, and some created by scholars solely for their own analysis. When comparing some of the available databases, it is immediately noticeable that the numbers do not match up.

For our research, we looked at three major databases that collect figures on suicide attacks: the Flinders University Suicide Terrorism Database (FUSTD),<sup>20</sup> the Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism database (CPOST), the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), the Rand Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, and the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) database at the IDC. Each database available online provides a different interface with a diverse selection of variables to choose from when conducting a search. Matching up as many of the variables as possible, we were able to compare global suicide attack

numbers, global numbers on suicide attacks carried out by women, and then the same sets for Iraq and Palestine. In some cases, it was impossible to directly compare due to the lack of figures available or the lack of options of variables, including gender. In the comparisons we could make, each dataset provided different numbers every time (See Appendix I).

The statistics provided by individual scholars also vary widely. For instance, Yoram Schweitzer asserts that there have been “more than 220 female suicide attackers both completed and intercepted in the final stages of the attack between 1985 and 2006, accounting for some 15 percent of suicide attacks during this time” whereas a survey by Robert Pape illustrates that between 1980 and 2003, “there were 462 suicide attacks” in total and out of those for which gender was identified, “15 percent were female (59 attacks).” Then, Lindsey O’Rourke in a dataset she compiled for her analysis, found that from 1985 to 2005, there were 86 completed attacks; similarly, from 1980 to 2003, she found 70 complete suicide attacks.<sup>21</sup>

While the figures alone vary greatly among these three scholars, just like in the databases, this example also illustrates some of the reasons for the variances. The first major factor that greatly impacts data collection is the choice of variables. As seen above, one scholar might include both completed and failed attacks in his count, another might just include the completed attacks, while the third might not specify what is included at all. In some of the databases, some other variables included depended on the definition of a terror attack. GTD, for example, allows the user to choose if the aim of the act is to attain some sort of larger goal, if there is intent to convey a message to a larger audience, or if the attack is outside normal warfare activities.<sup>22</sup>

The problem of what variables to include is compounded by the fact that reliable data is hard to collect on suicide bombings at all. Many times, information about the bomber—including gender—is missing in both media and official reports. Additionally, many attacks are not

claimed by a particular organization, which makes determining intent or message even more difficult. Furthermore, death tolls and counts of the wounded from an attack differ from one report to another, or are not mentioned at all. The scholars who create their own datasets face the same problems, then, as the databases; it is obviously impossible to go out and collect the data directly, and everyone has to rely on the reporting that is already available.

For these reasons, we decided not to create our own dataset for this project. We had planned on collecting data in order to establish a baseline for analysis. But we ran into a number of obstacles that prohibited this endeavor. First, we determined that we did not have enough time to sift through all the available sources; it might have been possible if we had devoted all our effort to only creating a database for our project. This leads to our second problem: what would be the utility of a new dataset? As demonstrated above, many other scholars done so time and again, but with so many competing databases with conflicting data, we decided that such an endeavor on our part would be of limited value. Instead, we decided to look at the datasets specified above in order to create our empirical analysis.

In each of the interviews we conducted, we also asked about the data problem in the field. Stevie Weinberg acknowledged there are problems with the numbers since there are so many variables involved. This is especially when measuring the success rate of a counterterrorism policy of a state. As Weinberg stated, “statistics are dangerous!”<sup>23</sup> Dr. Lindsey O’Rourke also admits that a completely accurate dataset is impossible to create. Her advice in dealing with this issue is, “the best researchers can do is to try to identify the most representative datasets for their work and openly acknowledge the limits of their data.” But Dr. O’Rourke does say that most existing databases “are ill-suited to answer certain research questions” depending on the variables included.<sup>24</sup>

Obviously, these problems and inconsistencies in data have great implications for analysis of the issue. In the course of our interviews, and after basic analysis of the databases and articles, we came to the conclusion that we can draw no conclusions from the data. We can, however, make some generalizations about women suicide bombers as a global trend. First, the trend of women suicide bombings is rising globally. We believe that the greatest numbers of these attacks will be in active conflict zones, but there will be scattered attacks in other arenas around the world as well, like in Russia and Pakistan.

Second, this tactic will continue to slowly spread to other terrorist organizations around the world. We say ‘slowly’ because we recognize there is a general lag in time before a group is able to make the tactic socially acceptable and in compliance with traditional gender norms. Finally, women suicide bombers will continue as a long-term trend in the global arena. The adaptability of this new ‘weapon’ makes it an attractive option that will remain on the table for militant groups until the next major trend appears. We are unable, however, to conclude from this set of statistics if women’s general participation in terrorist organizations is also increasing, or if their roles will be expanded.

While the empirical analysis portrays the global environment in which suicide terrorism is occurring, the numbers are only part of the picture. In order to better understand the trend of women suicide bombers, it is also necessary to look at the local environments in which the phenomenon occurs, the specific organizations that are using this tactic, and the individuals who are taking part in carrying out the attacks. In the following sections, each level of this model will be explained in generalized terms and then illustrated through the two case studies based on Hamas in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and al-Qaida in Iraq<sup>25</sup>

## II. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The first level of the analytic model—the environment—describes the context in which the tactic occurs; this context includes the social, political, economic, and cultural factors or conditions that foster the use of a militant tactic, such as suicide bombing. From within this level both the organization and individual actors emerge and provide the platform for a macro-level analysis of suicide bombings.

There exists a vast array of literature on the broader socio-economic-political ‘ills’ that provoke a person to become a terrorist and, in turn, a group of people to form a terrorist organization. This popular analytic approach often terms these conditions the ‘root causes’ of terrorism. That this sociological approach is one of the most common types of explanation for the rise of terrorism can be seen in the current National Strategy for Counterterrorism, in which it is articulated that one of the strategies to combat terrorism is “promoting representative and accountable governance” and spreading American core values.<sup>26</sup>

Additionally, there are a number of counterterrorism scholars who emphasize the importance of this macro-level analysis. Yoram Schweitzer has argued that looking at society and cultural factors is necessary for studying any terrorist tactic; both the individual and organizational level have to be incorporated into this wider context to inform policy.<sup>27</sup> This environmental level of analysis includes a number of aspects such as social acceptance: tactics of violence used by local organizations or resistance movements must be supported, to a certain degree, by a society. The larger population from which the terrorist group requires support and attracts recruits has to view the tactics used by that group as a legitimate and acceptable response to the problem facing their society, be it occupation, corruption, or other perceived subversive powers.

Often, a militant organization must justify its resort to widely violent means and hence turns to a religious, cultural, or historical explanation. For those societies in which Islam plays a major role, such as the Middle East, explanations are drawn from the religio-historical example of *jihad*. The concept of *jihad* will be explained further in the following section but in sum, the manipulation of this ideology by religious terrorist organizations has led to the creation of a culture of martyrdom in many Middle Eastern societies. Most prominent in Palestinian society, this culture of martyrdom glorifies those who give their lives fighting for the nationalist, religious cause which, in turn, facilitates the acceptance of tactics like suicide attacks. While jihadist organizations like Hamas and al-Qaida have strategically manipulated this concept, the fact that martyrdom existed throughout Islamic history as a culturally venerated idea makes it an essential aspect of the environmental context of the Middle East.

In addition, suicide bombers in the Middle East come from strictly traditional societies that delineate not only public and private spheres of activity, but also individual roles and norms of behavior based on gender, class, and tribal ties. This context not only determines the aforementioned social acceptance factor, but also drives the strategy and structure of terrorist groups embedded in each region. Generally speaking, the terrorist organization mirrors its surrounding environment as it is a derivative of that culture. In fact, traditional mores and norms are usually reinforced by the terrorist group as they fight to preserve a conservative view of culture in the face of some corrupting influence or external attack.

The final driving factor of militant organization's action at the environmental level is informed by the subsequent reactions of the target state. Be it Israel, Iraq, the US, or Russia, the way the state under attack responds will determine future actions of the terrorist organization in turn/return. As the frequency of a specific type of violent attack increases, the better the state is

able is to defend against it and counter such terrorism. Yet organizations such as al-Qaeda, Hamas or the PLO have proven their innovative abilities and quickly adapt to the changing circumstances in their surrounding environment. Stevie Weinberg, in an interview, described how the evolution of terror tactics over time is a result of the adaptability of terrorist organizations in their response to the actions of the state attempting to defend against them.<sup>28</sup> Hence, it is the responsibility of the state being attacked to defend against the *strategy* of the organization, not the tactics. The next iteration of violence by the terrorist group will be a reflection of the changing environment.

Each of these environmental factors are further complicated when gender is introduced into the mix. Due to the traditional and patriarchal culture that pervades most of the Middle East, women are marginalized societal actors, viewed as a lesser being with minimal capacity for action, especially militant actions. As Dr. Valentine Moghadam explains, “the area is characterized by extremely restrictive codes of behavior for women, such as the practice of rigid gender segregation and a powerful ideology linking family honour to female virtue...Men are entrusted with safeguarding family honour through their control over female members.”<sup>29</sup> The social acceptance of women’s involvement in violence is limited, then, by how much a society can tolerate without breaking its cultural foundation.

Consequently, many organizations are required to deftly maneuver within this environment in order to utilize women as suicide bombers. Just as with the evolution of suicide attacks in general, organizational leaders turned to religion to justify their choices. Women could now become heroines in the culture of martyrdom based on historical examples of women fighting in *jihad*. However, as will be described in more detail in the following section, leaders were careful to clarify that women assuming such roles was only a temporary aberration. The



traditional patriarchy was persevered in order to prevent any cultural fragmentation. As these militant organizations attempted to convince the populace to tolerate women's (temporarily) changing positions, they also desired a shocked and repulsive response from the populace of the target state. Gender norms of the enemy become the chink in the armor that militant organizations take advantage of by sending women on suicide operations.

What this general overview of the contextual level shows is that the environment is important for analyzing the growth of women suicide bombers in the Middle East, yet it is the manipulation of this environment by militant organizations that is key. The following case studies of Palestine and Iraq effectively demonstrate this case.

### **Palestine**

The Palestinian struggle for statehood has been multifaceted, prolonged and accompanied by daily violence. Implications of the Israeli occupation have had a dramatic effect on all aspects of Palestinian life in what has become one of largest international issues of our time. The mass displacement of families has weakened traditional, tribal ties and disrupted the sustainability of households. Working inside of the Palestinian territories comes with little return, yet travel into Israel through the wall or checkpoints and has become nearly impossible if done on a daily basis. The differences in per capita GDP are telling enough (\$1,924 in the West Bank and \$876 Gaza, compared to Israel's \$33,250.5 in 2011) yet traditional economic indicators only tell part of the story. The Palestinian population has been regarded by some census studies as one of the fastest growing populations in the world, almost doubling within the decade of the 1990s alone.<sup>30</sup>

The outcome of two intifadas, an Arabic term popularly translated to mean "uprisings", resulted in a combined decade of violence and an estimated 5,000 Palestinian deaths with tens of

thousands wounded.<sup>31</sup> These battles did little to change the status quo on either side, but instead led to increased Palestinian radicalization, especially among the youth.<sup>32</sup> As one respondent from the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism commented, the Second Intifada was marked by less experienced suicide bombers as the selection pool had grown and more Palestinians were determined to reach martyrdom.

The populations of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have structured their livelihoods around the nationalist cause through organizations of mass mobilization that integrate politics, employment, education, religion, charity and violent resistance into singular movements. The two most dominant of these movements are represented by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Hamas. The former exists as a nominally secular organization while the latter is decidedly Islamists, however both strive toward the ultimate goal of an independent, Palestinian state (yet with changing definitions of what state borders might include).

For decades the PLO ruled politically within the Occupied Territories through Yasser Arafat's establishment of the Fatah political party which gained dominance in 1965. However in 2006, religiously-based Hamas emerged victorious during legislative elections, in part due to the widespread corruption recognized by the public within the PLO. The result was not a peaceful transfer of power but rather a bloody and contentious feud between the two movements. The status quo has been a more divided population with de facto ruling by Hamas in the Gaza Strip and PLO elements ruling the West Bank.

As Middle East scholar Matthew Levitt explains, the Palestinian population "suffers not only from living under occupation, but from the neglect of a corrupt Palestinian leadership as well. As a result, the economic, social, and health conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are truly miserable, leaving a void that groups like Hamas are all too eager to fill."<sup>33</sup> The

growing spread of political Islam globally has only strengthened the autonomy of Hamas and support for its activities. Despite the organization's peaceful beginnings, 1993 marked a violent turning point in Hamas' tactics follow the PLO's signing of the Oslo Peace Accords. By refusing to acknowledge the legitimate existence of Israel, Hamas and its members prepared to die for their ultimate, nationalist cause.

The role of women within the Palestinian Territories is similar to that of neighboring Arab countries, wherein traditionally patriarchal tribal structures reign, yet the unique environment of living as a people without a state has had marked effects on gender. The constant militarization and nation-building projects that have consumed Palestinians' livelihood have on the one hand, allowed women to fill more public roles than in other Middle Eastern countries.

Throughout the early stages of the nationalist movement, segregation of the sexes and female relegation to the private sphere remained a pillar of Palestinian gender structures. Yet as Israeli settlers continued their migration onto more and more Palestinian lands, the nationalist movement was forced to make strategic changes. Julie Peteet argues that "rather than distancing the domestic sector and women from the sphere of formal politics, movements may recruit them as part of a strategy of mass mobilization"<sup>34</sup> Women in Palestine are increasingly seen as playing a diverse set of roles in the struggle for statehood. Within the last Palestinian Legislative Council, women were able to gain 13% of the 132 seats, a large portion of them Islamists, while former journalist Isra Almodallal was recently appointed as the new spokesperson for Hamas.<sup>35</sup>

However, gender equality indexes should dismay any who attempt to paint an overly optimistic view of female autonomy in the Palestinian territories. Sexual based violence, honor killings and domestic abuse are exceptionally high, according to a 2012 study by the Palestinian

Central Bureau of Statistics.<sup>36</sup> Sixteen women were killed by their husband or members of their husband's family in the same year as this report.<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, Palestinian nationalist movements play a diverse set of roles throughout the territories, founding charities, schools, daycares, job trainings, etc. The environmental setting detailed above is critical to understand the positioning of groups like Hamas and their use of suicide bombings. A poor economy, low levels of development, internal political strife and a growing religiously motivated population have all led to increased militarization. The lack of traditional military training and weaponry has similarly forced Hamas to take advantage of the low-cost, high-effect benefits of suicide operations. Palestinians from an array of backgrounds, differing ages and regardless of gender have sacrificed themselves as human bombs in the name of Islamist, nationalist organization. By next analyzing the organization as an actor, its goals, methods of attack, societal and religious justification of violence, and recruitment tactics, Hamas emerges as a relevant case study with which to further examine the topic of women suicide bombing.

## **Iraq**

The second case study of AQI is based out of Iraq immediately following the US-led military foray in 2003. In brief, this period is characterized by instability in every sector, occupation by foreign forces, and near-daily violence. In order to best understand the Iraqi environment in the 2000's, one has to keep in mind that "for the past three decades Iraq has been mired in conflict"; from the Iran-Iraq war beginning in the 1980 up through the second Gulf War that started in late 2003, Iraq has been ravaged by seemingly endless violence.<sup>38</sup> Even after the

withdrawal of US troops in 2011, Iraq continues to face round after round of sectarian conflict to this day.

Every sector of Iraqi society has been affected by this unstable security environment. Politically, the country has faced numerous challenges; from the US-led effort to create a viable governing body to questionable elections that produced a government plagued by problems with sectarian politics and a prolonged insurgency. In addition to the lack of internal stability, the central Iraqi government also faced many challenges working with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in the north in addition to a spillover of violence from neighboring Syria in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

Economically, Iraq has also faced a multitude of troubles. After 2003, Iraq's economic infrastructure and institutions were basically nonexistent; its renewed oil production brought about only minor growth; and it continues to face serious challenges in providing basic services—education, health, housing, electricity, water—and overcoming administrative corruption that is rampant throughout the public sector. Moreover, unemployment remains extremely high and the lack of education combined with the 'brain drain' has led to a shortage of skilled workers. Consequently, Iraq has also been facing a rise in deprivation and poverty, especially in its rural areas.<sup>39</sup>

These political and economic challenges have obvious ramifications for the Iraqi people in general. Demographic pressures have increased rapidly as the population grows, internally displaced persons and refugees try to return home, and more people seek refuge from the conflict in neighboring Syria. One of the most important factors in the social environment of Iraq is the sectarian rivalry that has been on an upward trend since 2003. This rivalry has not only played

out in the political realm, but also fueled the violence in the country as a whole. It is in this environment that the global jihadi movement grabbed a foothold and grappled for control.

In terms of women's place in society, Iraqi women are just as marginalized as in other Middle Eastern societies, especially with the increase in sectarianism and religious feuds. Some have noted that women's place has been further restricted over the years of war that has caused a hardening of traditional values. Women have been largely excluded from the public arena and many of the same cultural norms in other Muslim societies are just as pervasive in Iraq. Moreover, the war has had a great impact on women; not only are they facing the same struggles as men with poverty, trauma, unemployment, and general instability, but many have also lost their male relatives over the years of conflict. The large number of widows have additional burdens placed on them—like taking care of the family—as well as additional constraints—like the gender norms that restrict their access to employment or movement in the public sphere.

### **The Role of the Environment**

The above case studies have demonstrated the effects a society's larger context can have on the potential support for militant, Islamic organizations. Palestine and Iraq allow for adequate comparison due to similarities in religion, the strength of tribal ties, and low economic development.<sup>40</sup> In addition, both have faced (or continue to face) periods of direct occupation and respond to perceived influences of the West with a return to tradition. Decades of war have led to a lack of security and corrupt or destabilized political institutions. Drawing on certain interpretations of jihad, militant organizations have fostered an atmosphere supportive of martyrdom operations.

It is from within this local environment that the terrorist organization and individual bomber emerge, however the above factors alone cannot explain the latter's existence. The instability faced by Iraq and Palestine affects every sector of the countries' society, but these hardships are not unique in the Middle East and suicide bombings do not occur uniformly throughout the region. In addition, women's suicide bombing specifically has not occurred on the same level outside of Iraq and Palestine. The environmental context is necessary to include within any multilevel analysis, just like the global picture. Yet the proceeding organizational level of analysis is the most elucidating for the phenomenon of women suicide bombers.

### III. ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

The second level of analysis for suicide bombings is that of the organization; it is looking at how and why organizations deploy women or men as suicide bombers. At this level, there are a number of different factors that have to be evaluated: the goals of the organizational strategy; the message the organization wishes to convey to its own society, its enemies, and the international community; the motives of the organization in pursuing a particular tactic; the methods the organization uses to carry out an attack; and the ways in which the organization recruits new members.

Why is the organization an important level for understanding phenomena like suicide attacks? Analysis of the organization, according to many scholars in the field, is critical “in the study of terrorism and its causes because terrorist acts are rarely carried out by individuals acting on their own, but by individuals who are members of organizations, groups, or cells attached to a larger network.”<sup>41</sup> This is all the more so for suicide terrorism; as Stevie Weinberg emphasized throughout his interview, “lone wolves do not become suicide bombers.”<sup>42</sup> The organization provides the support that is necessary for a suicide bomber to accomplish his or her mission; it supplies the bombs, the training, and the target in addition an increased incentive to carry out the attack successfully. Even if an individual has the desire to carry out an attack, he or she still requires some technical and operational support.

Yoram Schweitzer echoed similar sentiments; he asserted that the “utilization [of women suicide bombers] has to do with an organization’s needs, constraints, and limitations.”<sup>43</sup> So using women fulfills those needs, and the suicide bombers are merely pawns. Just as any other



enterprise, terrorist organizations are focused on suitable allocation of resources and manpower, and so they are the driving force behind the spread of this tactic.

Unlike individuals, as will be illustrated in the following section, it is possible to create a profile of organizations that can be utilized to study terrorism. As Karla Cunningham summarized, “although there are fundamental differences among terrorist groups along ideological lines...that influence the types of ends these organizations seek, they are typically unified in terms of the means...they are willing to employ to achieve their goals.”<sup>44</sup> The main motivation of such organizations, according to Stevie Weinberg, is the rationality of a cost/benefit analysis.<sup>45</sup> Militant groups are rational actors, who are extremely innovative and quickly adapt to their environment. Dr. Mia Bloom agrees that “the leaders of terrorist movements make cost-benefit calculations to select tactics, targets, and the operatives that are the most effective” and many have discovered that women are extremely effective.<sup>46</sup>

But these groups also learn from one another. Dr. Lindsey O’Rourke makes the case that the tactic of suicide bombing initially spread “as different militant groups learned the value of the tactic from one another.”<sup>47</sup> Although there is a debate over the degree to which terrorist organizations influence each other’s tactics (i.e. intergroup competition theory vs. top-down organizational theory vs. economic theory), there is a consensus that successful tactics spread from one group to another, especially in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world. This is especially true in an environment where more than one organization is vying for support, as in Palestine.

Thus, as terrorist organizations are rational actors pursuing some goal, be it political, social, or economic, then certain generalizations can be made about the means they utilize. For suicide attacks, researchers have identified some of the main advantages to its use for all terrorist

groups: tactical effectiveness, low cost, low risk, immense psychological impact on the public, increased attention from the media, and increased sympathy from the international community. The use of women in an operational role merely augments all of these benefits, and adds very little risk. The “instrumentalization of femininities,” as Dr. Sjoberg called it, allows these groups to expand their operations and achieve their larger goals with greater ease.<sup>48</sup> Adopting the tactic of suicide attacks by women is a rational and sensible choice for the organization.

Besides the tactical advantages and strategic benefits that the operational use of women brings an organization in general, there are other important factors that illustrate how gender plays a role at the organizational level. These factors mirror those introduced in the introduction: exploitation of gender stereotypes and norms, excessive media coverage, changing religious discourse, and inspiration for the spread of the tactic, regionally and globally. The case studies of Hamas and Al-Qaeda in Iraq illustrate these factors in more detail.

### **Hamas**

*Harakat al Muqawamah al-Islamiyya (HAMAS)*, or the Islamic Resistance Movement, was formed in 1987 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin as a Palestinian offshoot to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt during the First Intifada. Hamas describes a number of organizational goals within its Charter which begins: “Allah is its goal, the Prophet its model, the Qur’an its Constitution, Jihad its path and death for the case of Allah its most belied...Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it” (The Martyr, Imam Hassan al-Banna, of blessed memory).<sup>49</sup> At its core, the Islamic Resistance Movement exists to reclaim the historic borders of Palestine through religious means.

Hamas emerged as an explicitly Islamic alternative to the PLO and was able to gain widespread support throughout the 1990s. Hamas continues to grow today through its provision of basic necessities such as orphanages, daycares, and schools, along with employment opportunities and job trainings.

However, studies have shown that major political events and increased Israeli offenses have also affected Palestinian support for Hamas and the organization's use of violence. Using a longitudinal public opinion poll, David Jaeger, et al (2012) was able to uncover that "individuals who were teenagers during the period of the Oslo negotiations tend to have relatively moderate preferences, while those who were teenagers during the First Intifada tend to be relatively radical."<sup>50</sup>

In terms of female Hamas supporters, women were integrated from the outset, granted within traditionally reproductive roles such as tending to the wounded during times of fighting or providing domestically for martyrs' families, however their political activism was mostly supported by organizational leaders.<sup>51</sup> Operating as a simultaneously religious and nationalist movement, Hamas has attempted to balance the mass mobilization necessary for achieving statehood while continuing to support traditional Islamic values. The Hamas Charter attempts to alleviate any gender paradoxes by stating that:

Hamas regards nationalism as part and parcel of the religious faith. Nothing is loftier or deeper in Nationalism than waging jihad against the enemy and confronting him when he sets foot on the land of the Muslim. And this becomes an individual duty binding on every Muslim man and women; a woman must go out and fight the enemy even without her husband's authorization.<sup>52</sup>

Women are expected to uphold conservative values, yet their role as a woman becomes irrelevant in cases of jihad. Suicide bombings especially have represented a popular tactic of jihad throughout the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and in 1993, Hamas participated for

the first time when operative Saher Tamam al-Nabulsi drove an explosive-laden car to the Mehola Junction and detonated himself between two buses, killing one civilian and one Israeli soldier.<sup>53</sup>

Hamas employed increasingly violent tactics throughout the 1990s and especially into the Al-Aqsa Intifada. From April 1993 until the beginning of the Second Intifada in September 2000, there were sixty one suicide bombings carried out against Israel and forty one of these were claimed by Hamas. From the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada up to May 2004, a total of 374 suicide bomb attacks were carried out by Palestinian organizations, ninety-nine of them by Hamas. By January 2004, there were seven women who had actually exploded and seven others who had been captured immediately before committing suicide attacks.<sup>54</sup>

While the number of women bomber's deployed by Hamas has remained decidedly marginal (two successful cases between 2004 and 2010, according to RAND), sixty-seven Palestinian women were captured while planning their suicide attacks between 2002 and the end of May 2006.<sup>55</sup> Although the contradictory nature of data on the phenomenon has previously been discussed, scholars from the field have been able to assert that “women's engagement in suicide bombings has gone from virtually unheard of twenty years ago to somewhat commonplace in the current global political arena.”<sup>56</sup>

This trend globally necessitates the inclusion of women within counterterrorism strategies as history has shown a correlation between increased levels of violence and political upheaval can lead to further radical radicalization. The changing organizational and religious discourse which has surrounded each attack by a woman makes the phenomenon even more worthy of study as the Palestinian community at large did not support the idea of women blowing

themselves up at the outset of its use. Suicide bombings by women therefore makes for a telling case study when attempting to track changing ideologies within Hamas as a whole. As Israeli counterterrorism scholar Yoram Schweitzer found while interviewing Palestinian security prisoners, “a decisive majority of the men interviewed by me contended that there was no need to employ women as suicide terrorists, and expressed opposition to women’s involvement in this type of action.”<sup>57</sup> In a traditional community within a religious organization, many male members of Hamas worried that the honor of women martyrs would be difficult to protect in prison, during interrogation by men and throughout probable body searches.

Prominent Palestinian Imams and religious guides within Hamas were also weary of the idea that women were needed within the suicide bomber role. Following the first suicide attack by a Palestinian woman in 2002 (Wafa Idris detonated herself at the entrance to an Israeli shoe store killing herself and an 81-year old woman but wounding hundreds) was not received positively by Hamas founder and religious leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Yassin spoke to the media following the attack commenting that, “I’m saying that in this phase (of the uprising), the participation of women is not needed in martyr operations, like men.”<sup>58</sup>

Yet in 2003, Muslim Brotherhood ideological leader Sheikh Youseff al-Qaradawi authorized the use of women to engage in suicide attacks through a fatwa which provided religious sanctioning for the enlistment of women martyrs.<sup>59</sup> The intensity of the Second Intifada led to a number of tactical shifts within Hamas’ methods of resistance, each of which required ideological support from the movement’s leaders. Just as the rationality behind suicide attacks in general has been accepted by scholars and counterterrorism experts as key to its widespread employment, women bombers are able to use their gender to their (or the organization’s) advantage. Drawing on gender stereotypes which stress the docile, motherly qualities of women,

these bombers are less scrutinized at Israeli checkpoints. As Caron Gentry and Laura Sjoberg explain, “traditionally, women and warfare or violent death are not associated with one another, and the notion of women as militants, terrorists, or suicide bombers goes against the grain of many culture’s prevalent concepts of femininity.”<sup>60</sup>

Despite prior reservations, Sheikh Hassan Yusef and Sheikh Ahmed Yassin began issuing statements in late 2002 that women could become suicide bombers under Islam and in 2004, Yassin publically concluded that, “women are like the reserve army—when there is a necessity, we use them.”<sup>61</sup> Operational necessity therefore, represents one of the main reasons for Hamas’ shift in strategy. In a culture wherein martyrdom is supported by religion and indoctrinated by society at an early age, the changing role of women in pursuit of a higher cause was gradually invited by the Palestinian population at. Recruitment and indoctrination represent the last important organizational structure to consider when analyzing this level of analysis.

A study conducted by Israeli researchers Even and Kimhi, entitled “Who Are the Palestinian Suicide Bombers?” set out to analyze the typologies of potential terrorists and found that regardless of past bombers’ characteristics, “a social environment that is supportive of such an attack; media that disseminated the information among the supportive population; spiritual leadership that encourages such attacks; and financial and social assistance for families of suicide terrorists” is necessary for the phenomenon to continue.<sup>62</sup> Through “public assemblies, public funerals; posters in the street containing the photos of the suicide terrorists (*shahids*); announcements from suicide bombers who explode in the format of a wedding; mourning booths where people come to express condolences; joyful parades after a successful suicide attack; and dressing very young children as suicide terrorists wearing explosive belts” Palestinian society becomes ingrained with the normalness of such attacks.<sup>63</sup>

Hamas has employed each of these indoctrinating and recruitment methods, especially among its stronghold in Gaza. The spread of global systems of mass communication have only strengthened this trend, even providing the Palestinian population with examples of male and women suicide bombers from other organizations around the world. In Mia Bloom's article "Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding," her research found that between 1994 and 1995, support for suicide operations never exceeded a third of Palestinians polled, whereas after November 2000, support for operations jumped to two-thirds or more.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, she writes that:

Under conditions of mounting public support, the bombings have become a method of recruitment for militant Islamic organizations within the Palestinian community. They serve at one and the same time to attack the hated enemy (Israel) and to give legitimacy to outlier militant groups who compete with the Palestinian Authority for leadership of the community. With every major attack since November 2000, support for suicide bombings has increased and support for the Palestinian Authority has decreased.<sup>65</sup>

Hamas operates within one of the most contentious regions in the world and competition for support even among those in favor of a Palestinian state is high. The market comparison that Mia Bloom presents is therefore a relevant one. If Hamas is able to influence the minds' of its consumers by presenting a unique product (suicide attack by women) *with* popular and religious support (something that the PLO is lacking), their organization will benefit from added members and funds.

In sum, this organizational level of analysis has examined the goals, tactics, religious support, societal support, and recruitment methods of Hamas. Looking at women suicide bombers within this context is especially telling as the phenomenon is employed by Hamas for seemingly tactical reasons yet with a wide array of implications for Palestinian society at large.

Changes in the rhetoric of Hamas leaders as well as new methods of recruitment and indoctrination have accompanied the emergence of women bombers. Therefore, counterterrorism efforts must focus on organizations like Hamas by tracking changes in ideology and tactic which prove more illuminating than environmental factors or attempts to profile singular bombers as will be discussed later in the paper.

### **Al-Qaeda in Iraq**

Although many of the suicide attacks carried out by women in Iraq are unattributed to, or unclaimed by, a specific group, it is known that suicide attacks in Iraq are primarily the domain of Sunni groups and, for the most part, the dispatchers were at least affiliated with al-Qaeda. As suicide bombings are the hallmark of al-Qaeda in general, and since al-Qaeda in Iraq is the largest of all insurgent groups by far, it was chosen to be the focus of the Iraq case study.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq first emerged in 2003 after the invasion of Iraq under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. In 2004, Zarqawi vowed allegiance to Osama bin Laden and changed the group's official name to Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn, more commonly referred to as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). At that time, the US State Department immediately designated AQI a terrorist organization. AQI continued to adapt over the following years, but remained the most active insurgent group in the Iraqi arena.

AQI is considered a Sunni jihadist group that seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate in Iraq and spread it throughout the region by first driving out the coalition troops, and then sowing civil unrest. The group's ideology is based on what is termed jihadi Salafism, which has five main features according to Mohammad Hafez: *tawhid*, *hakimiyyat allah*, literalist interpretation,



*jihād*, and establishment of the caliphate. *Jihād*, the waging of war in the path of Allah, is the most important of these concepts with regard to the topic of suicide bombers.

During the time period covered in this case study (2003-2010), AQI mainly targeted the US-led coalition forces, Iraqi security forces, and Shi'i civilians. In terms of methods, AQI pursues mainly high-profile tactics against a wide range of targets from civilian to military to religious. Some of these tactics include suicide bombings, car bombings, roadside bombings, shootings, assassinations, abductions, and paramilitary operations.<sup>66</sup> Over time, as defenses against these attacks have hardened, AQI's tactics have diversified and become more sophisticated. (See Appendix II for more information.)

Of all the tactics AQI utilizes, suicide bombings, although they are only a small percentage of the overall violence in Iraq, have the greatest impact on the ground in terms of lethality, targets, and shock factor. Not to mention that the rate of suicide attacks during the Iraqi insurgency greatly surpassed the number of suicide missions carried out by previous insurgent groups including Hamas, Hezbollah and the Tamil Tigers.<sup>67</sup> According to Jeffrey William Lewis, from the first blast in 2003 until 2009, there were approximately 1,286 suicide bombings that resulted in 12,144 deaths and nearly 29,000 people injured.<sup>68</sup> In one year alone (2007), according to the US National Counterterrorism Center's database, there were 394 attacks that resulted in more than 16,000 casualties.<sup>69</sup>

But, in the context of their ideology and goal to collapse the system and create an Islamic caliphate, the numbers should not be all that surprising. Anne Speckhard explains, "the primary military goal of groups like Al Qaeda... is not to win but simply not to lose."<sup>70</sup> AQI, as a part of the larger jihadi Salafi movement al-Qaeda is interested mainly in forcing the West out of the region, fomenting sectarian strife so as to assert its dominance over the Shi'a, promoting the

establishment of an Islamic caliphate, and creating a base of operations.<sup>71</sup> Thus, it is natural that the hallmark of AQI is suicide bombings—especially coordinated or multiple attacks at one time—that are intended to produce mass casualties and mass destruction.<sup>72</sup> It also makes sense that the suicide attacks tend to spike around developments in the Iraqi political arena; AQI is unwilling to accept any established rule except their own and will continue to disrupt the status quo until that happens.

One of the ways in which AQI has adapted within the Iraqi arena is having women carry out suicide operations. The numbers of suicide bombings carried out by women in Iraq range from 28 to 80 from 2003 to 2008, depending on the source. Thus, women suicide bombers have only conducted a small percentage of the total number of suicide attacks in Iraq, which matches the global trend. But, the participation of women in Iraq is relatively high when compared with the rest of the world and with other conflict zones. Jessica Davis claims that the number of attacks carried out by women in Iraq account for 24.7% of all such suicide bombings globally. Compare this to the Chechen groups, which contributed about 20%; the Palestinian groups, which account for 24%; and the LTTE that contributed about 14% of the total number.<sup>73</sup> The Iraqi case, then, has one of the highest rates of involvement by women bombers in both the Middle East and the world.

Additionally, the rate of women's involvement as suicide bombers in Iraq has been steadily increasing. In 2003, there were only two women bombers who successfully carried out an attack. In 2005, there were between 3 and 5 successful bombers and in 2007, this number increased again to between 5 and 8. Then, in 2008, the number of successful attacks carried out by women skyrocketed to somewhere in the twenties or thirties. As Mia Bloom noted, "by 2007, female suicide bombers had become the weapon of choice for AQI and the tactic had spread" to

other groups in Iraq; in 2011, Bloom found that women perpetrated almost a third of all suicide bombings in Iraq.<sup>74</sup>

In looking at how AQI employs women as operatives, there are a number of factors that indicate the organization views the female cadre differently from its male members. These factors mirror those presented in the introduction: exploitation of gender norms, excessive media coverage of women bombers, the expansion of women's militarization in violent movements, and the shifting religious discourse on women's operational capacity.

First, AQI has taken advantage of the cultural sensitivities regarding the separation of male and female public spheres and the limited interaction allowed between the sexes. Women are not only viewed as less threatening, but are also able to enter crowded public spaces, like a marketplace, without attracting suspicion. Thus, it is much easier for women to carry out attacks against 'soft' targets than men. Furthermore, the long and loose style of dress that is deemed appropriate for women in Iraqi culture makes it easier for women to conceal explosives.

Due to the ease of restrictions women face, not only is the lethality rate of their attacks higher than that of men, but they are sent more often to carry out assassination operations. Dr. Lindsey O'Rourke found that, globally, women suicide bombers took part in 65% of assassinations.<sup>75</sup> This trend can be witnessed in at least two separate occasions in Iraq. Both attacks occurred in 2008, and in both the women bombers were targeting specific tribal chiefs.

Second, AQI takes advantage of the media's sensationalization of women suicide bombers to increase propaganda and augment the benefits it already received from the tactic of suicide bombing in general. By deploying women as suicide bombers AQI increased motivation and support from its own populace, multiplied the psychological impact of terror on the target audience, and amplified the publicity the organization received internationally. All of these

benefits allowed AQI to acquire more combatants to join the fight; forced their enemies, or those getting in their way, into submission; and allowed them to spread their message around the region and the world.

Third, some analyses of this trend note that the growth of women's involvement in Iraq is indicative of significant change occurring in the global *jihad*; in other words, AQI's experience in Iraq has opened the entire al-Qaeda movement to further involvement of women. Since 2003, there have been a number of suicide attacks by women in conflicts associated with al-Qaeda, including in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Somalia. Although it is still a marginal trend, women suicide bombers are spreading to other groups and regions. Additionally, women have taken more of an active role in other operational capacities, as can be seen in the recent female combat unit in Syria. But, as of yet, there have been no examples of women having strategic or leadership roles in any of the al-Qaeda associated groups.

Finally, Iraq is one of the key arenas in which the shifting Islamist religious discourse on women's roles in violence has occurred. In the Salafi interpretation of Islam, most women are not encouraged to take active roles, especially in the male-dominated world of violence. This is not to say that women were not involved in organizations like al-Qaeda prior to the war in Iraq, but women's roles were for the most part limited to providing support for the organization logistically. In their own type of *jihad*, women provided safe houses, helped secure supplies, and, most importantly, raised their sons to be future warriors in the fight against the enemy. In the context of the religiously-defined conservatism, in addition to the societal conservatism, the call for women to partake in violent acts was not appropriate for their gender.

But, spurred by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, religious leaders in the Salafi jihadi movement built a case to support violent acts perpetrated by women. Drawing on examples of

women companions of the Prophet fighting in *jihad*, Muslim writers from the early 1990's began discussing the woman's role in *jihad*; some of the most prominent of these works came from Muhammad Khayr Haykal, Nawaf al-Takruri, and Yusuf al-A'yyiri. All three of these scholars argued a point that became the cornerstone upon which al-Qaeda would pin its support for women suicide bombers: women's participation in violent *jihad* is not only allowed, but required of women because it is now *fard 'ayn*, an individual religious obligation on all Muslims. These ideological underpinnings, then, have "laid the intellectual ground for the full participation of women in *jihad* among radical Muslims."<sup>76</sup>

Nevertheless, this process of allowing women to have an active violent role is still highly debated. Many radical Muslims still speak out against women's participation as suicide bombers, which is part of the reason this tactic remains marginal. Some of the hardliner groups, like AQAP, have not had the need to resort to using women in their conflict zone. As mentioned previously, the largest spikes in participation of women often corresponds with a rise in the general level of violence.

Despite the ongoing debate, al-Qaeda's commanders have made a concerted effort to support women's active involvement in *jihad*, often in gendered ways. There have been at least two magazines created by al-Qaeda that specifically target women. The most recent magazine, *al Shamikha*, has been described as a "Cosmo-like magazine for women" that provides advice ranging from "pleasing your husband and working on household duties" to "calls to violent terrorism and praise for the wives of suicide bombers."<sup>77</sup> There are even tips for women on how to properly perform their jihadist duties. The earlier magazine, *Al Khansaa*, published an issue in 2004 reaffirming women's obligation to perform *jihad*:

"Women in the family is a mother, wife, sister, and daughter [sic]. In society she is an educator, propagator, and preacher of Islam, and a female *jihad* warrior... When *jihad* becomes a personal obligation, then the woman is

summoned like a man, and need ask permission neither from her husband nor from her guardian, because she is obligated and none need carry out a commandment that everyone must carry out.”<sup>78</sup>

There have also been women figureheads from al-Qaeda used to shore up support for the tactic. For instance, *Asharq al-Awsat*, a Saudi newspaper, published an interview in 2003 with an al-Qaeda woman, who called herself ‘Umm Osama’ (the mother of Osama), claimed to “oversee the training of female mujahideen affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Taliban” and called for more women to join the cause.<sup>79</sup> Then, in 2008, Musab al-Zarqawi’s wife published a letter calling for women to aid in *jihad* in Iraq, including with martyrdom operations.<sup>80</sup> Thus, both al-Qaeda and AQI have used specific gendered strategies to recruit women.

This manipulation of the religious message by Salafi jihadi leaders to support their operations proves not only the significance of ideology in this case, but also its insignificance; religion is an important tool for al-Qaeda and AQI to rally the populace and control its organization, but it is strategy and power that drives the operations and the mission.

### **Role of the Organization**

The case studies of Hamas and AQI prove that the organization has been an important driving force behind the growth of women taking part in suicide operations. While there are some differences between the two groups—intensity of violence, religious vs. nationalist aspirations, and differing strands of Islamism—the similarities in the operations and justifications involving women illustrate that organizational level is critical for understanding the trend of women suicide bombers.

While the environment provides the very important context for the phenomenon of women suicide bombers, it is the organization that determines how they are put to use. This is

not to suggest that these women are mere pawns, for as will be explained in Part IV, they do have their own agency. But the greatest evidence for why and how women suicide bombings occur, and why they are also an increasing and expanding trend both in the region and at the global scale, comes from the organizational level.

This level of analysis also proves that the gender of the bomber does matter to some extent. The fact that the bomber is a woman has a particular impact on the same main factors identified in introduction: operational strategy, media, and rhetoric. Starting with the last one, the impact on gender in the religious rhetoric was explained in more detail in the few preceding paragraphs; but, basically, it seems to indicate that strategy trumps the religious ideology of the organization. Religion matters only to the extent that they control their message and unify their members. That message is malleable in the face of an effective strategy.

The second major factor—the media—has also been explained in this section quite extensively. Obviously, a woman draws more attention than a man in all media outlets, and the organization uses that bias to their advantage. Just as the organization exploits gender norms and biases in carrying out its operations with women. The operational strategy for women follows the same guidelines for men, but their gender allows the organization to expand its field of operations even further. Finally, the case studies of Hamas and AQI show that organizations learn from one another. Witnessing the effectiveness of women suicide bombers in one case causes the tactic to spread between organizations both within the same conflict and to other conflict zones.

These findings from our analysis have great implications for not only understanding the phenomenon of women suicide bombers, but also for finding new ways to combat it. Although the recommendations for counterterrorism policy will be explained further in the conclusion, it

can be concluded here that focusing on the organization is a key part of that policy. Looking at the interactions within the organization, between separate organizations, and between the organization and the outside world allows us to take advantage of the gaps in those links.



## V: INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

The final level of analysis necessary for understanding the phenomenon of women suicide bombers is that of the individual. At this level the personal motivations and views of the women who choose to participate in a suicide attack are examined. The individual level of analysis focuses on where the bomber was raised, the quality of her childhood, and discovering what went wrong to drive her to violence. Dr. Mia Bloom labels this analytic process a “psychological autopsy.”<sup>81</sup> It is also this level that most of the media, and indeed many scholars, are most interested in; it gets to the heart of the issues of why these women want to kill others, and themselves in the process.

The individual is an important part of analyzing suicide bombing in general, and especially for counterterrorism experts. Such attacks are carried out by a woman--or a man--and so knowing her motives is a key part to understanding the causes of suicide bombings. Dr. Berko emphasized just how much one can learn from case studies and background investigations; her own observations of women in Israeli prisons have contributed greatly to understanding the person of the bomber.<sup>82</sup> Beyond just the advantages to the field of psychology, putting together a picture of the kind of person who chooses such behavior can also benefit security forces in terms of counter-radicalization. Forming a profile of the type of person who is most susceptible to the radicalization process can help those working to counter terrorism and prevent its spread.

Unfortunately, there are several problems with relying solely on this bottom-up approach to studying suicide attacks. First, and foremost, it has proved an impossible task to create a single, standard profile for either a man or a woman who might choose to go down the violent route. To date, no single profile has been created for a terrorist, a bomber, or even a school shooter and common criminal. While there might be some similarities in motive, background, or

behavior, there are always significant enough differences to prevent the successful creation of a profile.

In addition to the difficulties in creating a profile, there is also the rather large problem of a lack of available and reliable information. Any of the background information available on the suicide bombers after the attack comes from their surviving friends and family, but they usually cannot explain the motivations of the bomber. Even a martyrdom video, when there is one, explains the reasoning of the bomber in terms of support for a specific ideology or cause rather and rarely provides insight into the bomber herself. Dr. Lindsey O'Rourke found this to be the greatest challenge in her research; it is incredibly difficult to prove "what really motivated any individual suicide attacker since, by definition, they are already dead."<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, while it is possible to interview failed suicide bombers, the reasons they give for their actions and choices are viewed by many as unreliable. Yoram Schweitzer, who has interviewed hundreds of failed bombers in Israeli prisoners and some of their dispatchers, even noted that the woman's declared motive can change over time; she typically starts by providing the media with a personal reason (or vice versa), and then shifts later to a more ideological stance.<sup>84</sup> Sometimes a person is not self-aware enough to provide an explanation for their actions. Thus, for the most part, women's motivations for becoming suicide bombers anywhere is mostly conjecture and difficult, if not impossible, to prove accurate.

Despite the difficulties associated with this approach, there has been a lot of research conducted on personal motivations and bomber profiles. Each of our interviewees addressed the issue of personal motivations differently. Dr. Anat Berko asserted from her extensive experience with interviews and fieldwork that men and women suicide bombers are unique; while both are influenced by ideology to some degree, women require more of an incentive to turn to violence

than men. In her view, women tend to have more personal motivations than men and are also crueler in the violence they carry out.<sup>85</sup>

In contrast, Dr. Lindsey O'Rourke argued that both men and women "are driven by a combination of personal and political motives" that have the same basic root: "a deep sense of commitment to their community and support of a specific political cause." In her opinion, many studies at the individual level "overemphasize the 'personal motives' driving women as opposed to the 'political' motives driving men."<sup>86</sup> Dr. Mia Bloom also contends that "the reality of women's motivation is a complicated mix of personal, political and religious factors sparked at different times by different stimuli." She argued that "both men and women experience personal reason for joining terrorist movements."<sup>87</sup>

Stevie Weinberg struck a middle ground through his assertion that women and men appear to have many of the same motivations: altruism, nationalism, economic or religious reasons. But, then, women have two additional ones: revenge and feminism; according to Weinberg, feminism in the sense that 'if men can do it, why not women?'<sup>88</sup> Dr. Assaf Moghadam emphasized the role of affection ties; for both men and women bombers, familial and network ties often push a person to also join a cause or organization. But, beyond that, Dr. Moghadam insisted that studying and comparing motivations is a very difficult task to accomplish academically.<sup>89</sup>

The only aspect that each scholar *cannot* seem to agree on is whether or not there is something fundamentally different motivating men and women.<sup>90</sup> In a review of the literature, though, there are generally five categories of motives presented in the literature on women suicide bombers: revenge, nationalism, community, religion, equality, and trauma. Many of these motivations are also highly contested, like whether women are actively seeking equality with

men through their participation in violence. Or, whether women have been coerced into becoming suicide bombers in many cases. Examples of women being drugged, taken advantage of, or raped run rampant in many of the personal stories about suicide bombers. While there have certainly been cases of such coercion, there are many more cases of women volunteers. As Dr. Laura Sjoberg stated, “many, many people seek out these opportunities rather than being forced.” She asserted that “there is ample evidence that women make the political choice to participate” but “that choice is constantly undermined in media coverage, political analysis, and scholarly analysis [that] constantly portrays ‘terrorist women’ as neither fully terrorist nor fully women.”<sup>91</sup>

Thus, understanding a phenomenon like suicide bombings is not possible by simply looking at the individuals. But that is not to say that analyzing the individual level is not useful; rather it must be incorporated into the larger picture provided by the organizational and environmental levels of analysis. With that in mind, we now turn to specific examples of women bombers, about whom a relevant amount of information was available from academic and media sources.

### **Examples from Palestine**

Reem Raiyshi, a mother-of-two in her early 20s, became the first woman suicide bomber to be claimed by Hamas on January 14, 2004. Raiyshi detonated her explosive vest inside of a security office as workers were going through a security check before entering the nearby industrial complex. She killed two Israeli soldiers, a policeman and a civilian security worker. Raiyshi was able to approach the entryway after pretending to require a body search because over the metal detectors because of medical plates in her leg. Israeli Brigadier-General Gadi Shamni explained that, "Because she was a woman, a female soldier was sent for to search her.

She used this opportunity to enter the building, a meter or two past the door, and blow up.”<sup>92</sup>  
(BBC). Seven other Israelis and four Palestinians were injured.

Although Sheikh Yassin had made previous statements against the use of women in this role, following the bombing the spiritual leader of Hamas publicly stated that Raiyashi had opened the door for more women to die in the fight against Israel, and he them to volunteer.<sup>93</sup> The local media outlets followed suit, sanctioning the martyrdom of Hamas’ first woman bomber. The daily evening newspaper, *Al-Masaa*, described how, “Reem met her death as a Shahida embracing her rifle, underlining with unprecedented courage her love for her two small children – her son of three and her daughter of a year and a half – martyring herself in defense of land, honor, family, and the [previous] Shahids.”<sup>94</sup>

Yet despite support from the organization’s highest religious authority and aside from the explicitly anti-Israeli martyrdom video Reem had recorded prior to her death, the main focus of media stories (and scholarly accounts to follow) turned to questions about her sexual affairs and bouts of depression. In The Guardian just two weeks later, reporters focused their efforts on uncovering more about Riyashi’s dramatic personal life, referencing reports in the Israeli press that she “was coerced into becoming a human bomb to restore her family honor and atone for an extramarital affair. Some reports said her husband drove her to the site of the attack.”<sup>95</sup> Additionally, Israeli intelligence officials claimed that Reem had suffered from depression for many years and had tried to commit suicide before. Yet as Kevin Peraino explained in an article in *Newsweek*, “Whatever the motive, her act was generally praised by local Hamas leaders... ‘Women must decide for themselves what their priorities are,’ says Sami Abu-Zuhry, a Hamas official in Gaza. ‘Raising children for jihad, or participating in acts of martyrdom.’”<sup>96</sup>

Israeli counterterrorism scholar Yoram Schweitzer has conducted hundreds of interviews with men and women security prisoners, ranging from immediately after an arrest to following years of imprisonment. This work has given Schweitzer insight into the confounding role that a sensationalized media plays. He explains, "While initially the involvement of Palestinian women in suicide bombings was uniformly perceived as abnormal and a social aberration, approaches have been posited in the media to explain such attacks. One approach, appearing primarily in the Arab and Muslim media, has cast women suicide bombers as heroines and pioneers. The more dominant and "western" approach has presented women suicide bombers as socially deviant and, in some measure, as "damaged goods."<sup>97</sup>

To base the perceived motives of a now deceased individual on culturally-infused media accounts is a fallible method which has been employed in scholarly writings on the subject of women suicide bombers (see Barbara Victor's dramatic *Army of Roses* and others who widely cite the work). The individual bomber and their motives are left highly up to outside interpretation and without environmental or organizational context, efforts at analyzing the phenomenon lack reliability.

Even in cases of failed bombers, when someone is left to speak about their intentions and thought processes behind them, a conflicting picture emerges. Thouria Khamour was arrested on May 19, 2002, one day before she planned to carry out her suicide attack of an Israeli target in Jerusalem. Thouria was interviewed on numerous occasions immediately following her arrest and years late while in prison. Yoram Schweitzer has tracked her story and uncovered a significant shift in rhetoric and how it changed over time. Just ten days after her arrest, Thouria claimed that she had volunteered for the operation mostly because of her position as an outcast, failed student and because of her family's objections to a man who wished to marry her. Most

telling was her revelation that she feared “God would not regard it (her personal circumstances) as a worthy motive, and would therefore not consider her a *shahid*.”<sup>98</sup>

Yet just two years later in 2004 when Thouria was interviewed after doing time with her fellow women security prisoners, a much more religious and nationalistic story unfolded. She claimed that she lived her life to struggle against the Israeli occupation and even denounced the previously dramatic end to her engagement as an elaborate hoax to throw off potential Israeli security forces. She explained to reporters, “I asked that if I succeeded in carrying out my mission, my reward would go to Palestinian orphans. I wanted to sacrifice myself for my country and God.”<sup>99</sup> Thouria’s representation in the media shifted from that of a downtrodden outcast to a strong, religious warrior while her own rhetoric changed from that of personal motives to supporting the nationalist cause. As Schweitzer concludes in a later piece, “Inaccurate stereotypes make it difficult to find effective ways to combat suicide bombing and direct the women to alternative nonviolent expressions of protest and opposition. Most of all, defusing this phenomenon requires attention to the greater organizational context of suicide bombers and those who sponsor them.”<sup>100</sup>

Then, on November 23, 2006, Fatma Omar An-Najar became the oldest Palestinian woman suicide bomber as she denoted herself at the age of 64 while Israeli troops were traveling through the Jabaliya refugee camp. The media was quick to recount in a number of stories the downtrodden and marginalized life which An-Najar had suffered. Her oldest daughter, Fatheya, described in an interviewed with the Associated Press that her mother had decided to become a bomber because her grandson had been killed. “They [the Israelis] destroyed her house, they killed her grandson - my son...another grandson is in a wheelchair with an amputated leg. She and I, we went to the mosque. We were looking for martyrdom.”<sup>101</sup>

Fatma and her daughter undoubtedly lived under inhumane conditions, however, this fact alone cannot account for the rise in martyrdom operations since the Palestinian population as a whole has been relegated to a marginalized life for decades without large numbers of individuals deciding to blow themselves up. A culture supportive of such actions, a willing organization with technical capabilities and religious justification are better suited for accounting for such changes. Following Fatma's attack, Hamas spokesman, Abu Obeideh, stated that the attack was part of the group's tactics. "We told the Zionist enemy we will meet it with many surprises ... and this is one of the surprises."<sup>102</sup> This statement reflects the larger environmental context which facilitates growing suicide attacks.

### **Examples from Iraq**

While very little information is available in general on most women suicide bombers, even less is known about the women in Iraq. Of all the 'women martyrs' in Iraq, only two issued public martyrdom videos before their attack: Nour Qaddour al-Shanbari and Waddad Jamil Jassem. For the most part, the women suicide bombers from AQI, and in Iraq in general, are rarely identified. The woman bomber who is most written about in the Iraqi context is actually a Westerner: Muriel Degauque, a Belgian woman who converted to Islam, blew herself up in Baquba due to what has been identified as anger at the American invasion of Iraq.

In looking at Iraqi women, though, there are three main examples that have been written about in more detail in the media and in scholarly works: Raniya Mutlaq (aka Rania al-Anbaki), who was arrested before she could detonate her device; Hasna Maryia, about whom an article in Time Magazine was written; and Samira Ahmed Jassim, who was not a bomber, but a recruiter of women suicide bombers for a Sunni insurgent group linked to al-Qaeda. The first example,



Raniya, was fifteen years old when she was arrested in 2008 for attempting to attack a school in Baquba. The policemen who stopped her and removed the explosive device from her body claimed that she seemed to be in a daze, acting as though she was in a trance. In subsequent interviews with her, Raniya claimed that she was drugged and forced to be a suicide bomber by her husband, a member of AQI. The Iraqi investigators were unable to prove if she was really coerced or was a willing volunteer, and she was sent to prison. Raniya's story matches many of those reported in Western newspapers and magazines: a sad life full of misery and discontent followed by brainwashing or coercion into carrying out violent attacks.<sup>103</sup>

In contrast, the second bomber, Hasna Maryia, was a willing volunteer to the mission and successfully carried out her attack at an Iraqi police checkpoint in 2007. In the story presented by Time Magazine, Hasna is described as a woman who volunteered for a suicide mission for AQI when her brother failed in his attack and was killed. In addition to interviews with surviving family members, the magazine also was shown two DVDs provided supposedly by al-Qaeda members. The first DVD was a recorded statement made by Hasna prior to her attack in which she asserted it was her choice to become a martyr, and the second video was a recording of the attack itself, in which the cameraman is heard saying, "God is great... The stupid woman did it."<sup>104</sup> What is interesting is despite the fact that Hasna was acknowledged to be a willing participant in the attack, the article's main focus is portraying her as "a strong woman driven mad with sorrow following the death of her brother."<sup>105</sup>

The final example is a woman about whom much has been written, and on whom the theory that coercion is the main driving factor behind the rise in women suicide bombers in Iraq is based: Samira Ahmed Jassim, also known as 'the mother of the believers.'<sup>106</sup> Arrested in 2009, Jassim confessed to recruiting dozens of Iraqi women to become suicide bombers for Ansar al-

Sunnah, a Sunni group linked to AQI in the Diyala province. A military spokesman claimed in a news conference that Jassim had recruited a total of 80 women, 28 of whom actually carried out attacks.<sup>107</sup> In her interviews, she confessed to not only taking advantage of women in bad circumstances, but also to using rape as method for creating more bombers. She would organize the rape of a woman, and then convince her that the only way to save the honor of her family was to become a martyr. Although many of the reports, and the investigators themselves, admitted the inability to confirm the facts of the cases Jassim discussed, her confessions launched a new wave of literature on women being coerced and tricked into becoming bombers in Iraq and in other parts of the world.<sup>108</sup>

To sum up, while there are some unique facets to the individual study of women suicide bombers in Iraq, the fact is that there is very little information available and even less of it can be confirmed. It is clear there is no one single profile for a woman who chooses to take part in a suicide attack in Iraq. The utility of an individual analysis for the Iraqi case is limited as no generalizations can be drawn from it.

### **Role of the Individual**

When analyzing the role of the individual within the phenomenon of women suicide bombing, few conclusions can be uniformly drawn. People are multidimensional beings with changing motives and ideology. Often what goes on in an individual's head is not visible for the wider public to see and understand. To better examine this tactic of violence, a wider lens must be used.

Additionally, the above case studies have demonstrated the faulty methods with which information on individual bombers is collected. The media can be shaped by the views of its

readers while failed bombers themselves can be shaped by the environment of their prison cell and prison mates.

As Dr. Mia Bloom has concluded, “Forty years of research on terrorism has revealed little about what motivates women to commit terrorism.”<sup>109</sup> By relying solely on an individual approach to analysis other levels—particularly the organization—and the interactions between that individual and other individuals in the larger group or society, is wrongly ignored. Above theories explaining the bomber’s person, marginalized upbringing and individual tragedies as giving rise to terrorism results in broad generalizations that are difficult to prove and remain inapplicable to wider scenarios. Women bombers come from a vast array of educational, economic and ideological backgrounds (See: Schweitzer, Berko, Even & Kimhi). As the National Geographic documentary concludes, “One point we’re trying to make is that you can’t rule anyone out these days. The stereotype of the face of terror is negligible.”<sup>110</sup> Scholars, counterterrorism experts and the media alike would do well to focus their efforts on understanding the role of the individual as he/she is incorporated within a larger organization or environment rather than focusing on dramatic and oftentimes even sexist accounts of the actual man or woman.

## V. CONCLUSION

### The Big Picture

Women suicide bombers are a complicated and multi-faceted topic. This research introduced a multilevel approach to the issue, in which the subject was analyzed from the environmental level, the organizational level, and the individual level. Like a complex mechanism, these three levels interact with each other and are intimately linked in the creation and development of women suicide bombers. Combining this analytic approach with an examination of two case studies in the Middle East— Hamas from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and al-Qaeda in Iraq from the Iraqi insurgency—we provided a complex and in-depth study of women’s involvement in suicide attacks.

Through this study, our goal was to address two main research questions: is the phenomenon of suicide attacks by women a systematically increasing trend, and do women bombers differ substantially from their male counterparts? The answer to the first question is yes. An empirical analysis at the global level indicates that women will continue to take part in violent conflict as suicide bombers in an incremental way. We project that there will continue to be spikes and drops in the figures dependent on the overall level of violence, but in a general upward trend.

Moreover, the global jihadi movement, namely al-Qaeda and its affiliates, will continue to play a large role in the expansion of women suicide attacks. The globalization of this movement has already been cited as a driving force behind the spread of the tactic of suicide bombing in general, so it will continue to do so for that of women.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, this increase of women suicide bombers might also lead to an extension of women’s operational roles in militant groups. We already see the emergence of women’s battalions in Salafi jihadist groups,

like in Syria; with the religious justification of women's involvement in violent activities established, this trend will also likely continue as long as there are women choosing to volunteer.

But, the future of this trend is greatly dependent on the organization; on how willing and able it is to manipulate the environment and individuals in order to achieve its goals. For this same reason, it is unclear if increased operational capacity for women in such groups will lead to more of a strategic role for women, like at leadership levels, at this time, yet it is something to be alert for.

As for our second question, we have determined that women suicide bombers do differ from men bombers in certain, limited ways, but the importance of such differences varies depending on the level of analysis. At the environmental level, the sex of the bomber does not matter as much. Both men and women share the same environment and lay claim to the same 'root causes' that prompt their behavior; culture and society is the same for both. The one difference is how gender is viewed in that generally conservative context, but that comes more into play at the other two levels.

At the organizational level, women and men bombers are differentiated based on how they are put to use and the impact they have. Women have easier access to targets and attract less attention just as they receive dramatically greater media attention and have a larger psychological impact. The tactical benefits for women far outweigh that of men so organizations are willing to shift their strategy in order to adjust to their involvement in operations. What's more, these organizations shift their recruitment strategies to target more women. It is clear, then, that organizations think about women in a different manner than their men.

The final level—the individual—shows that there are just as many similarities as there are differences between men and women in terms of motivations and personality. Most

importantly, while it is an interesting field of study, the utility of such a micro-level analysis is limited. It is nearly impossible to generate hypotheses based on the limited and controversial evidence provided at this level, so the gender differences do not matter as much. If it were possible to create a single profile in order to prevent recruitment and counter radicalization, then the individual level would be much more useful. But such an achievement has proved unattainable.

In brief, we found that the key to answering both of our research questions was in the organizational level of analysis. The organization will determine the utility of women in operations, and will most likely play to the benefits their gender provides them. It is at the organizational level that we see the greatest exploitation of gender, and that we see the greatest weaknesses for exploitation.

### **Recommendations**

Based on this final analysis, there are a number of recommendations we can make for US counterterrorism (CT) policies in order to respond to the threat of women suicide bombers. Before going into the details of our recommendation, the specific threat this poses to the United States must be explained. There are two main arenas that the US has to deal with in countering terrorism: the domestic and the international. On the domestic front, the US has had only very few instances of suicide bombings within its borders, and even less experience with operations carried out by women terrorists. This is in contrast to the international level; US people and interests abroad have been attacked numerous times over the past two decades.

Therefore the US must establish a different set of strategies for countering the terrorist threat domestically and internationally. Overseas, in the Middle East and elsewhere, the US has

to protect its people within government establishments, such as bases and embassies, its strategic interests like energy sources, and its allies. Domestically, the focus of US CT efforts is to prevent attacks by stopping ongoing terrorist operations and preventing further radicalization.

Organizations like Hamas pose more of a threat overseas, while those associated with al-Qaeda pose a threat both domestically and internationally.

However, the two arenas often merge and thus differentiating between threats can be challenging. For example, there are thousands of Muslim men (and women) from Europe and North America who have gone to Syria to join the call to *jihad*. Militants who have gone to fight with the Syrian rebels are a concern for the many Western governments because “some of these foreign fighters may return to perpetrate attacks in the West.”<sup>112</sup> While the numbers are definitely higher in Europe, the US is equally disturbed by this rising trend.

The US must grapple with instability spreading from the Syrian conflict to the wider region, and with the return of radicalizers to its homeland. Just as the overseas threat from Syria has come to impact the US domestically, so too could the global trend of women suicide bombers. As shown in our study, women are not merely coerced to join, but many volunteer just as men do. The domestic context of the US, being a different environment than that in Iraq and Israel, provides different ways for women to become involved in terrorist activity; some of these include online propaganda (like *Al Shamikha*) or other online jihadist forums.

It is within this complex environment that US CT policy must be formulated. We hope to incorporate our recommendations for dealing with the threat of women suicide bombers within this context. First, we believe that the CT strategies—domestic and international—must be generally gender neutral. This is not to say that gender should not be considered, but rather that the goal should be to fight the strategy, not the tactic. We support a broad and multi-faceted

approach to countering terrorism overall, and much is in place already. Women should be integrated into each component of counterterrorism strategies and knowledge of the gendered ways women are incorporated into local environments where these terrorist organizations operate is a key first step in this process. We do not support creating a new policy just to counter women suicide bombers; suicide bombing might be a tactic that can be stopped temporarily, however, this would not address the terrorists' strategy.

Counter-radicalization efforts should be directed at militant societies as a whole, however for the purpose of making specific recommendations for mitigating the possibility of growing women jihadists, local and even international NGOs could begin media and public campaign strategies that support alternative female public figures engaged in the nationalist struggle who do not resort to violence. Positive and peaceful images such as these would do well to counterbalance the public heroism past martyrs have received. In addition, local community groups of women should be supported with means to conduct non-violent projects aimed at alleviating day-to-day grievances that come with living as a female in a war torn country. Even broader programs that help with basic literacy or skills-training might decrease the perceived rewards that accompany a woman's suicide (honor and financial support for a martyr's family). By countering the root-causes of terrorism that were discussed in the environmental section and addressing organizational means of terrorist recruitment, the US can employ new methods of mitigating women's decision for joining militant movements.

Since the key to understanding the trend of women suicide bombers is at the organizational level, so too should the focus of CT policy. In his interview, Stevie Weinberg explained the basic terrorist equation: "a terrorist attack = motivation x operational capacity" of the organization.[cxxxviii] The core of US CT efforts at home and abroad should address both



the organizational motivation and operational capacity of militant, jihadist movements. Existing networks should continue to be studied and analyzed; the recruitment and training methods of these groups should be targeted.

Nevertheless, we are not arguing that women abandon the nationalist cause and disengage with resistance movements altogether. It would be false to conceive of Al-Qaeda or Hamas as the only perpetrators of violence within the conflicts they are engaged in. Provocation comes from a wide range of actors, including the US, and women often have cause for defending their homeland. However, one instance wherein radical Islamic trends that are harmful to the West can be counterbalanced surrounds the topic of *jihad* itself. Concepts of *jihad* within terrorist organizations' ideology has tended to focus on the "lesser jihad" (*jihad al-asghar*) or the physical struggle against the enemies of Islam as opposed to the "greater jihad" (*jihad al-akbar*) that demands an inner spiritual struggle. A method for countering violent *jihad*, therefore, would be to support Imams and mosques within at-risk communities that stress greater, nonviolent forms of *jihad*.

Moreover, studies like this one should be implemented on each main tactic of a militant group in order to counter their operational capacity and develop effective security measures. These analyses should also forecast possible future trends in terrorist tactics, such as explosive tampons or body implants. But the US Intelligence Community and other government entities in counterterrorism have proven quite successful in hindering terrorists' capacity to perform operations; although outright proof of their achievements is often impossible to obtain since most of it occurs behind the scenes and at a classified level, one can take the lack of a large number of major attacks in the US as indicative of their overall success.

As a part of addressing operational capacity, the US needs to include women in its threat assessments. This is not in contradiction to our earlier assertion that CT policy should be gender-neutral; rather, it complements it. Women and men should both be treated as a threat, without a special approach for either gender. Both abroad where troops are stationed and domestically at security checkpoints, women should be screened similar to men. Both women and men should be considered when creating a list of potential terrorists. Security forces, military forces, and even intelligence analysts need to be aware that women can pose as much of a threat as men. The only gender-specific change that should take place is to reverse inaccurate stereotypes of women.

Motivation is the more difficult part of the equation to solve. There are a multitude of factors that play into the motivation of terrorist groups, and not all of them are known. In some ways, a psychologist or doctor on the ground could do well at assessing the mental state of women in communities where suicide bombers have been prevalent. Coping methods or other, healthy outlets for anger and depression would be beneficial to any war-torn communities. However, the environment and ‘root causes’ can also play a role in motivating these groups, and their members. This is especially true overseas, where many organizations are fighting against for a particular cause against a government or general authority in conditions often characterized by poverty and turmoil, as illustrated in Part II of our paper. As Dr. Lindsey O’Rourke mentioned, “it is important to remember that many anti-American militant groups are trying to combat specific U.S. policies.”<sup>113</sup>

Therefore, at the international level, the US should continue to work with populations and address their concerns in the parts of the world in which we are involved. The US should also continue its aid and support to address structural problems in those countries in which terrorist activity is common. In some ways, a psychologist or doctor on the ground could do well at

assessing the mental state of women in communities where suicide bombers have been prevalent. Coping methods or other, healthy outlets for anger and depression would be beneficial to any war-torn communities. Efforts like these are already in place in many countries in the Middle East and around the world, including Afghanistan, Iraq, and Egypt.

Domestically, US CT efforts should continue to focus on working with the ‘at risk’ communities as described in its ‘countering violent extremism’ (CVE) policy. Although this policy still has a lot of issues that need to be resolved, it is on the right track; its strategy revolves around “impeding the radicalization of violent jihadists in the United States.”<sup>114</sup> The US must remain committed publicly to religious tolerance and cultural diversity, and it must work with those communities most susceptible to radicalization in order to prevent their turn to terrorism. Programs of community outreach should be geared towards the population as a whole, though, and not be gender-specific.

A key part of this strategy is addressing the radical ideology of jihadists and countering their propaganda. There are a number of contradictions in the messages that radical Islamists teach, which can be highlighted to oppose their effectiveness; this includes the shift in justifications for women to join *jihad*. Many of the programs implemented as a part of this strategy are based on cooperation among federal and local government officials and religious leaders. This is, in fact, one of the problems with the current CVE policy: the public role of the government. There is a conflict between the enforcement and intelligence roles of the government and trying to support the community’s right to free speech. As seen in the recent NYPD example, many of these communities feel the outreach programs are also targeting them.

The US government also should not become too involved in the religious aspect. Instead, the US should privately support moderate imams and religious leaders in the Muslim

communities to highlight the contradictions in jihadist ideology and promote a more tolerant Islam. These religious leaders can also counter the jihadist propaganda in order to undermine support for the groups and prevent more radicalization in these populations. The US should consider sponsoring more imams to travel overseas to work with the ‘at risk’ populations in other parts of the world that are of interest to us.

But, while we support confronting the motivational aspect of terrorism through community and environmental endeavors, we firmly believe that the focus should not be on the individual. Profiling in order to counter radicalization, or prevent it, will be counter-productive since creating profile in the first place, as aforementioned, is impossible. Like our analysis in this paper indicated, the individual level is not the most important factor for understanding the threat of women suicide bombers and so it should not be the focus of CT policy.

Lastly, it is important to point out that most of these recommendations are not new, and a number of them are already being implemented within the US government. We are calling for added clarity and the continuity of such missions. Defining terrorism and defining the variables that are included, for example, would help clear up the muddled picture presented by current statistics and reports. The more aware we are about the threat, the less the organization will be able to successfully deploy such an effective ‘weapon’ as women suicide bombers. Cooperation is also crucial for success, both with our international partners and between agencies within the US Government. Finally, recognizing that women can be victims as well as victimizers will help counter stereotypes and prevent future attacks.

---

**NOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> Title was inspired by a quote from Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2006): 167.
- <sup>2</sup> *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying to Kill*, Directed by Brian Handwerk, The National Geographic, December 13, 2004.
- <sup>3</sup> Dr. Mia Bloom, "Re: GWU Graduate Student Request," Message to Cara Beining, March 17, 2014, E-mail.
- <sup>4</sup> Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008): 15.
- <sup>5</sup> Dr. Laura Sjoberg, "Re: GWU Student Request," Message to Kari Evans, March 30, 2014, E-mail.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Dr. Lindsey O'Rourke, "Re: GWU Graduate Student Request," Message to Cara Beining, March 5, 2014, E-mail.
- <sup>8</sup> Stevie Weinberg, Personal Interview, January 7, 2014.
- <sup>9</sup> Sjoberg, "Re: GWU"
- <sup>10</sup> Debra D. Zedalis, *Female Suicide Bombers* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, June 2004), <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub408.pdf>
- <sup>11</sup> Skaine, *Female*, 150.
- <sup>12</sup> Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011): 128.
- <sup>13</sup> Skaine, *Female*, 49.
- <sup>14</sup> Bloom, "Re: GWU"
- <sup>15</sup> Yoram Schweitzer, Personal Interview, January 6, 2014.
- <sup>16</sup> Anne Speckhard, "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 11 (2008): 1025, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10576100802408121>.
- <sup>17</sup> Lindsey O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" *Security Studies* 18, no. 4. (December 2009): 681-2, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09636410903369084>.
- <sup>18</sup> Sjoberg, "Re: GWU"
- <sup>19</sup> Bloom, "Re: GWU"
- <sup>20</sup> As provided in Riaz Hassan, *Life as a Weapon: The global rise of suicide bombings* (NY: Routledge, 2011).
- <sup>21</sup> Jessica Davis, "Evolution of the Global Jihad: Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36 (2013): 280-81. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2013.763598>.
- <sup>22</sup> <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/>
- <sup>23</sup> Weinberg, Interview
- <sup>24</sup> O'Rourke, "Re: GWU"
- <sup>25</sup> AQI is currently known as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS), and in February 2014, al-Qaeda cut off ties with this group.
- <sup>26</sup> The White House, "National Strategy for Counterterrorism," Washington, DC, June 2011, 5, [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism_strategy.pdf).
- <sup>27</sup> Schweitzer, Interview
- <sup>28</sup> Weinberg, Interview
- <sup>29</sup> Valentine Moghadam, "Development and Patriarchy: The Middle East and North Africa in Economic and Demographic Transition," *Wider Working Papers* (United Nations: World Institute for Development Economics Research, 1992): 10
- <sup>30</sup> The World Bank, "World Development Indicators," [Variable selection dataset tool customizable according to country, series and time], <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/variableSelection/selectvariables.aspx?source=world-development-indicators>
- <sup>31</sup> "Fatalities in the Intifada," *BTselem*, [http://www.btselem.org/statistics/first\\_intifada\\_tables](http://www.btselem.org/statistics/first_intifada_tables)
- <sup>32</sup> David A. Jaeger, Esteban F. Klor, Sami H. Miaari, and M. Daniele Paserman, "The Struggle for Palestinian Hearts and Minds: Violence and Public Opinion in the Second Intifada," *Journal of Public Economics* 96.3-4 (2012): 354-68.
- <sup>33</sup> Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006): 5.
- <sup>34</sup> Julie Peteet, "Women and the Palestinian Movement: No Going Back?." In Saud Joseph and Susan Slyomovics (ed), *Women and Power in the Middle East* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 2001): 142.

- <sup>35</sup> "Hamis Appoints First Spokeswoman," *Al Jazeera*, November 11, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/11/hamas-appoints-first-female-spokesperson-2013111013586831738.html>
- <sup>36</sup> "Al-mar'a wa al-rajal fee Philasteen: Qadayen wa ihsaa'at [Women and Men in Palestine: Issues and Statistics]," Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012., [http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_PCBS/Downloads/book1936.pdf](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book1936.pdf).
- <sup>37</sup> "Meeting in Hebron discusses the role of media in cases of the murder of women," *Palestinian News & Info Agency*, August 27, 2013, <http://www.wafa.ps/arabic/index.php?action=detail&id=159081>.
- <sup>38</sup> Rick Van der Ploeg, Anthony J Venables, and Samuel Wills, "Oil and Fiscal Policy in Iraq," (Oxcarre, Department of Economics, University of Oxford, 2012): 1 <http://www.oxcarre.ox.ac.uk/index.php/Policy-Papers/policy-papers.html>
- <sup>39</sup> USAID, *Iraq: Economic Recovery Assessment*, February 2009 <http://egateg.usaidallnet.gov/resources/220>
- <sup>40</sup> Dr. Anat Berko, Personal Interview, January 6, 2014.
- <sup>41</sup> Assaf Mogahdam, "The Roots of Suicide Terrorism: A multi-causal approach" in *Female Terrorism and Militancy: Agency, utility, and organization* edited by Cindy D. Ness (NY: Routledge, 2008): 93.
- <sup>42</sup> Weinberg, Interview
- <sup>43</sup> Schweitzer, Interview
- <sup>44</sup> Karla J. Cunningham, "Cross-Regional Trends in Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26, no. 3 (2003): 172. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10576100390211419>.
- <sup>45</sup> Weinberg, Interview
- <sup>46</sup> Bloom, Interview
- <sup>47</sup> O'Rourke, "Re: GWU"
- <sup>48</sup> Sjoberg, "Re: GWU"
- <sup>49</sup> "The Avalon Project: Hamas Covenant 1988," The Avalon Project: Hamas Covenant 1988, 2008, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/hamas.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp).
- <sup>50</sup> Jaegar et al, 354.
- <sup>51</sup> Islah Jad, "Islamist women of Hamas: between feminism and nationalism," *Asia Cultural Studies* 12 (2011): 195-201.
- <sup>52</sup> Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Religious Terrorism: Hamas and Islamic Jihad* (Ardsley, NY: Transnational, 2002): 54.
- <sup>53</sup> Amanda Ripley, "Why Suicide Bombing Is Now All The Rage," *Time*. 07 Apr. 2002, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0%2C9171%2C227546%2C00.html>.
- <sup>54</sup> Shaul Kimhi and Shemuel Even, "Response to "Who Are the Palestinian Suicide Bombers?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16.4 (2004): 817.
- <sup>55</sup> "Terrorism Incidents Database Search," Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, RAND, 2009, [http://smapp.rand.org/rwtid/search\\_form.php](http://smapp.rand.org/rwtid/search_form.php).
- <sup>56</sup> Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics* (London: Zed, 2007): 2.
- <sup>57</sup> Yoram Schweitzer, "Palestinian Istishhadia: A Developing Instrument," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30.8 (2007): 667-89.
- <sup>58</sup> "Hamis Spiritual Leader: We Don't Need Women Suicide Bombers," Beliefnet, *AFP*, 02 Feb. 2002. <http://www.beliefnet.com/News/2002/02/Hamis-Spiritual-Leaderwe-Dont-Need-Women-Suicide-Bombers.aspx#B411O2GhkHq5udd.99>.
- <sup>59</sup> "The Qaradawi Fatwas," *The Middle East Quarterly* XI.3 (2004): 78-80.
- <sup>60</sup> Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry, *Women, Gender, and Terrorism* (Athens: U of Georgia, 2011): 4.
- <sup>61</sup> Aaron Regular, "Mother of Two Becomes First Female Suicide Bomber for Hamas," *Haaretz*, January 16, 2004.
- <sup>62</sup> Kimhi & Even, 830.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 829.
- <sup>64</sup> Mia M. Bloom, "Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding," *Political Science Quarterly* 119.1 (2004): 65.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 61.
- <sup>66</sup> "Al Qaeda in Iraq," International Terrorist Symbols Database, ADL, 2013, [http://archive.adl.org/terrorism/symbols/al\\_qaeda\\_iraq.html](http://archive.adl.org/terrorism/symbols/al_qaeda_iraq.html).
- <sup>67</sup> Hafez, *Suicide*, 3.
- <sup>68</sup> Jeffrey William Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012): 207.

- <sup>69</sup> Ibid., 214.
- <sup>70</sup> Anne Speckhard, "Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq," *Democracy and Security* 5 (2009): 45.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid., 43.
- <sup>72</sup> Hafez, *Suicide*, 98.
- <sup>73</sup> Davis, "Evolution," 281.
- <sup>74</sup> Bloom, *Bombshell*, 213-4.
- <sup>75</sup> Lindsey O'Rourke, "Behind the Woman Behind the Bomb," *The New York Times*, August 2, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/02/opinion/02orourke.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.
- <sup>76</sup> David Cook, "Women fighting in *jihad*?" in *Female Terrorism and Militancy: Agency, utility, and organization* edited by Cindy D. Ness (NY: Routledge, 2008): 46.
- <sup>77</sup> Neal Ungerleider, "Close Reading al Qaeda's Latest Jihadist Women's Emagazine (Yes, Latest)," *Fast Company*, March 15, 2011, <http://www.fastcompany.com/1738605/close-reading-al-qaedas-latest-jihadist-womens-emagazine-yes-latest>.
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid., 698.
- <sup>79</sup> O'Rourke, "What's," 700.
- <sup>80</sup> Davis, "Evolution," 283.
- <sup>81</sup> Bloom, "Re: GWU"
- <sup>82</sup> Berko, Interview
- <sup>83</sup> O'Rourke, "Re: GWU"
- <sup>84</sup> Schweitzer, Interview
- <sup>85</sup> Berko, Interview
- <sup>86</sup> O'Rourke, "Re: GWU"
- <sup>87</sup> Bloom, "Re: GWU"
- <sup>88</sup> Weinberg, Interview
- <sup>89</sup> Moghadam, Interview
- <sup>90</sup> In reference to a quote from O'Rourke, "What's"
- <sup>91</sup> Sjoberg, "Re: GWU"
- <sup>92</sup> " Hamas Woman Bomber Kills Israelis," *BBC News*. 14 Jan. 2004, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/3395973.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3395973.stm).
- <sup>93</sup> Chris McGreal, "Palestinians Shocked at Use of Suicide Mother," *The Guardian*, 26 Jan. 2004. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/jan/27/israel>.
- <sup>94</sup> "Conflicting Arab Press Reactions to the Gaza Suicide Bombing," MEMRI, 27 January 2004.
- <sup>95</sup> McGreal, "Palestinians."
- <sup>96</sup> Kevin Peranio, "Flexing Their Muscles," *Newsweek*, 09 Apr. 2009. <http://www.newsweek.com/flexing-their-muscles-119085>.
- <sup>97</sup> Schweitzer, "Palestinian."
- <sup>98</sup> Ibid, 32.
- <sup>99</sup> Chen Kost-Bar, "I Dreamed of Killing over 100," *Maariv magazine*, January 23, 2004; In Yoram Schweitzer, ed. "Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality?" Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2006, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lng=en&id=91112>.
- <sup>100</sup> Schweitzer, "Palestinian"
- <sup>101</sup> Rory McCarthy, "Woman, 64, Blows Herself up in Attack on Israeli Troops," *The Guardian*, 23 Nov. 2006, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/nov/24/israel>.
- <sup>102</sup> McGreal, "Palestinians."
- <sup>103</sup> Ali Mohammad, "Would-be Suicide Bomber Recalls Failed Mission," *ICR Issue* 348, Institute for War & Peace Reporting, August 5, 2010, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/would-be-suicide-bomber-recalls-failed-mission>; For more details, see Bloom, *Bombshell*, 219-221.
- <sup>104</sup> Cragin and Daly, *Women*, 64.
- <sup>105</sup> Bobby Ghosh, "The Mind of a Female Suicide Bomber," *Time*, June 22, 2008, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1817158,00.html>.
- <sup>106</sup> Steven Lee Myers, "Iraq Arrests Woman Tied to Bombings," *The New York Times*, February 3, 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/04/world/middleeast/04iraq.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/04/world/middleeast/04iraq.html?_r=0).
- <sup>107</sup> "Iraq's 'female bomber recruiter,'" *BBC News*, February 4, 2009, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7869570.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7869570.stm).
- <sup>108</sup> For more details, see Bloom, *Bombshell*, 223-225.

---

<sup>109</sup> Bloom, “Re: GWU”

<sup>110</sup> *Female Suicide Bombers*

<sup>111</sup> Schweitzer, Interview; Berko, Interview (“global Salafism is like an epidemic”)

<sup>112</sup> Thomas Hegghammer, “Number of foreign fighters from Europe in Syria is historically unprecedented. Who should be worried?” *The Washington Post*, November 27, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2013/11/27/number-of-foreign-fighters-from-europe-in-syria-is-historically-unprecedented-who-should-be-worried/>

<sup>113</sup> O’Rourke, Interview.

<sup>114</sup> Jerome P. Bjelopera, “Countering Violent Extremism in the United States,” *CRS Report Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress*, February 19, 2014, 1, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/R42553.pdf>



**APPENDIX I  
DATABASE COMPARISON**

**SUICIDE ATTACKS WORLDWIDE 1990-2010**

Year	FUSTD		CPOST		START		RDWTI		ICT	
	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed
1990	3	9-16	4	14	2	8	1	1	0	0
1991	7	4	5	62	2	71	1	13	2	37
1992	2	32-38	1	4	2	33	0	0	0	0
1993	7	33-35	4	247	0	0	0	0	1	2
1994	10	201-225	10	210	11	228	6	167	5	30
1995	24	317-446	21	272	20	289	7	57	4	44
1996	23	413-446	19	310	16	235	5	62	4	66
1997	10	57-160	7	45	11	253	1	7	3	24
1998	17	421-735	15	348	25	224	9	299	10	151
1999	19	56-102	20	85	31	93	15	31	5	19
2000	39	262-394	24	272	39	290	10	72	6	104
2001	76	3,324-3,420	44	3177	56	3268	46	3175	27	3715
2002	92	1,004-1,036	62	590	81	703	66	617	40	239
2003	75	795-889	70	833	85	792	75	717	N/A	N/A
2004	190	1,931-2,267	137	1782	119	1282	111	1730	N/A	N/A
2005	306	2,572-3,026	196	2755	212	2294	337	3055	N/A	N/A
2006	255	2,142-2,385	270	2290	174	1773	261	2005	N/A	N/A
2007	N/A	N/A	469	5567	361	4397	328	3680	N/A	N/A
2008	N/A	N/A	336	2971	246	2372	274	2303	N/A	N/A
2009	N/A	N/A	271	3391	179	2350	69	538	N/A	N/A
2010	N/A	N/A	235	2921	171	2295	0	0	N/A	N/A

**SUICIDE ATTACKS BY WOMEN WORLDWIDE 1990-2010**

Year	FUSTD		CPOST		START		RDWTI		ICT	
	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed
1990	N/A	N/A	1	0	0	0	1	1	N/A	N/A
1991	N/A	N/A	1	15	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1992	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1993	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1994	N/A	N/A	3	84	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1995	N/A	N/A	4	47	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1996	N/A	N/A	7	105	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1997	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1998	N/A	N/A	6	56	3	12	2	25	N/A	N/A
1999	N/A	N/A	6	51	6	22	3	2	N/A	N/A
2000	N/A	N/A	4	57	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2001	N/A	N/A	4	19	2	7	0	0	N/A	N/A
2002	N/A	N/A	5	82	2	5	3	11	N/A	N/A
2003	N/A	N/A	11	151	4	43	7	68	N/A	N/A
2004	N/A	N/A	7	171	6	143	7	34	N/A	N/A
2005	N/A	N/A	4	106	2	11	4	115	N/A	N/A
2006	N/A	N/A	6	30	2	91	4	96	N/A	N/A
2007	N/A	N/A	8	81	8	82	6	96	N/A	N/A
2008	N/A	N/A	30	383	18	204	20	168	N/A	N/A
2009	N/A	N/A	5	146	10	247	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2010	N/A	N/A	6	144	8	125	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

### SUICIDE ATTACKS IN IRAQ 1990-2010

Year	FUSTD		CPOST		START		RDWTI		ICT	
	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed
1990	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1991	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1992	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1993	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1994	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1995	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1996	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1997	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	N/A	N/A
1998	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1999	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	3	N/A	N/A
2000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2001	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2002	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2003	27	223-234	25	197	18	104	25	144	N/A	N/A
2004	146	1590-1839	95	1337	112	974	66	1088	N/A	N/A
2005	276	2263-2713	169	2418	162	1849	285	2797	N/A	N/A
2006	193	1696-1908	153	1606	95	1228	191	1665	N/A	N/A
2007	N/A	N/A	257	3877	202	2866	251	3150	N/A	N/A
2008	N/A	N/A	141	1343	107	1186	152	1190	N/A	N/A
2009	N/A	N/A	68	1018	50	1068	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2010	N/A	N/A	56	694	50	654	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

### SUICIDE ATTACKS BY WOMEN IN IRAQ 1990-2010

Year	FUSTD		CPOST		START		RDWTI		ICT	
	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed
1990	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1991	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1992	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1993	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1994	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1995	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1996	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1997	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1998	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1999	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2000	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2001	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2002	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2003	N/A	N/A	1	3	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2004	N/A	N/A	1	55	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2005	N/A	N/A	3	49	1	6	2	52	N/A	N/A
2006	N/A	N/A	2	5	1	90	3	95	N/A	N/A
2007	N/A	N/A	5	80	4	66	5	81	N/A	N/A
2008	N/A	N/A	26	359	16	232	16	127	N/A	N/A
2009	N/A	N/A	3	139	5	215	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2010	N/A	N/A	2	58	4	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

### SUICIDE ATTACKS IN ISRAEL 1990-2010

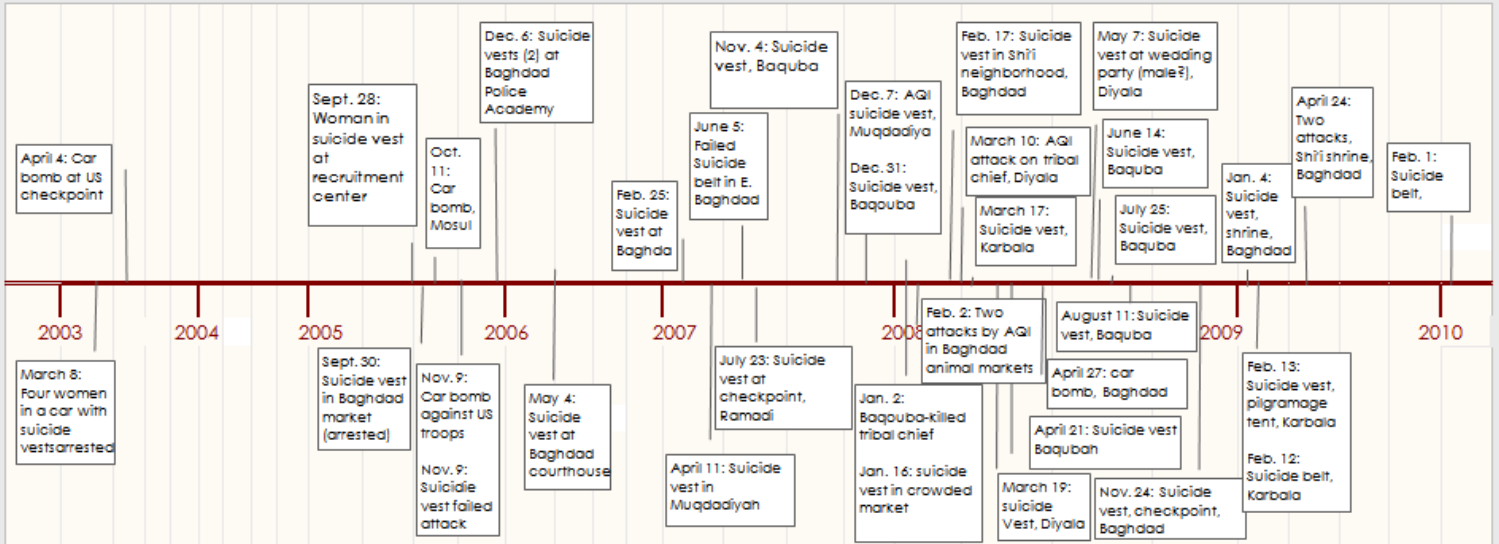
Year	FUSTD		CPOST		START		RDWTI		ICT	
	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed
1990	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1991	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1992	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1993	4	5-6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
1994	5	37-43	5	40	4	37	4	27	4	40
1995	4	33-36	7	64	1	7	2	28	2	24
1996	4	60-70	3	61	4	61	5	62	4	66
1997	5	30-32	5	28	2	22	1	7	2	24
1998	3	4	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	2
1999	0	0	0	0	2	3	18	81	0	0
2000	7	26-29	2	1	0	0	42	270	2	15
2001	55	200-290	29	116	25	98	16	162	19	81
2002	79	337-356	52	240	43	242	7	54	30	231
2003	26	154-165	24	153	18	140	3	17	N/A	N/A
2004	10	66	15	59	7	49	6	18	N/A	N/A
2005	12	45-48	7	28	5	21	1	4	N/A	N/A
2006	3	18-19	3	4	4	13	1	0	N/A	N/A
2007	N/A	N/A	1	3	1	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2008	N/A	N/A	3	1	2	12	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2009	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2010	N/A	N/A	0	0	1	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**SUICIDE ATTACKS BY WOMEN IN ISRAEL 1990-2010**

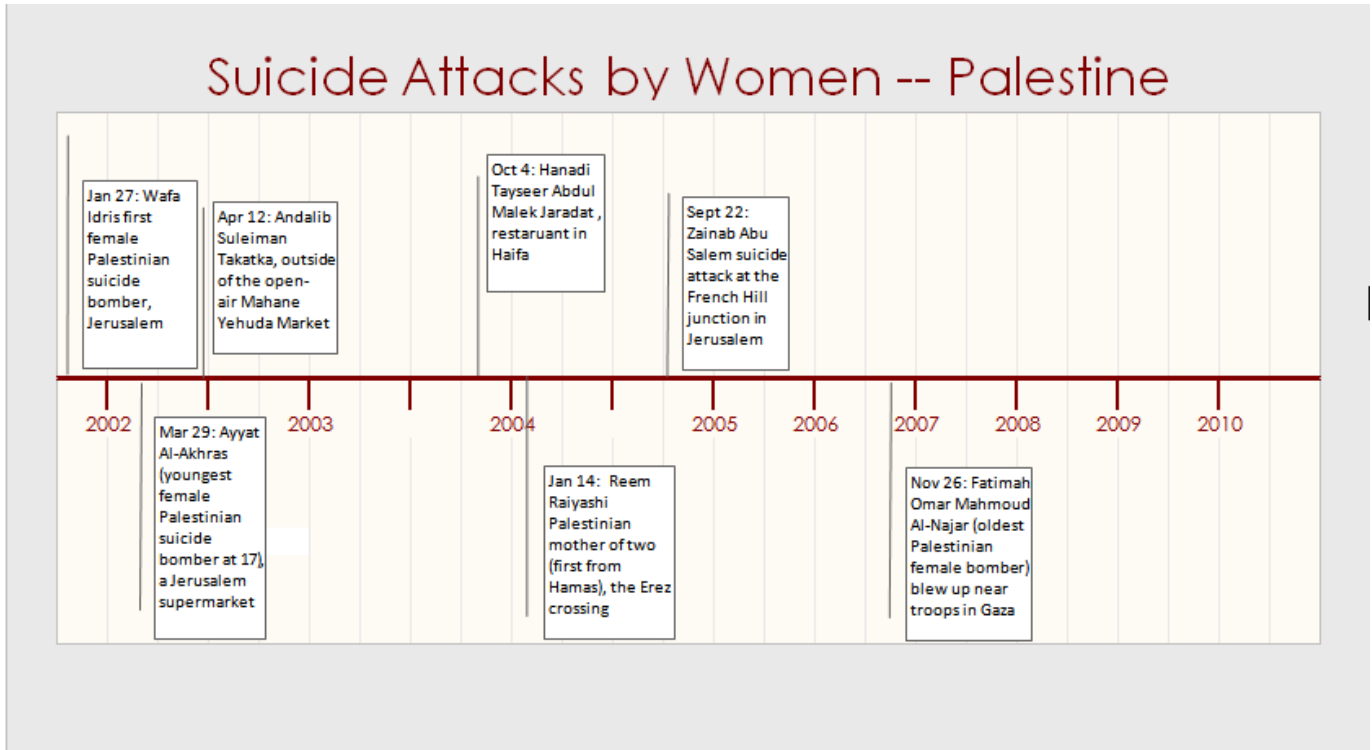
Year	FUSTD		CPOST		START		RDWTI		ICT	
	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed	# of Attacks	Killed
1990	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1991	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1992	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1993	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1994	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1995	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1996	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1997	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1998	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
1999	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2000	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2001	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2002	N/A	N/A	4	10	2	5	3	11	N/A	N/A
2003	N/A	N/A	2	24	0	0	2	24	N/A	N/A
2004	N/A	N/A	2	6	0	0	1	3	N/A	N/A
2005	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2006	N/A	N/A	2	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2007	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2008	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
2009	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2010	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

## APPENDIX II IRAQ TIMELINE

### Suicide Attacks by Women -- Iraq



### APPENDIX III PALESTINE TIMELINE





## INTERVIEWS

Dr. Anat Berko (Retired Lt. Col.), Criminologist and Researcher at the Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), Herzliya

Yoram Schweitzer, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv

Dr. Assaf Moghadam, Associate Professor at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) and Director of Academic Affairs at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), Herzliya

Stevie Weinberg, Director of Operations, International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya

Dr. Mia Bloom, Professor of Security Studies at University of Massachusetts Lowell

Dr. Lindsey A. O'Rourke, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Dickey Center for International Understanding, Dartmouth College

Dr. Laura Sjoberg, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Florida

## DATABASES

“Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism (CPOST).” The University of Chicago, 2014.  
<http://cpost.uchicago.edu/>

“Flinders University Suicide Terrorism Database (FUSTD).” In *Life as a Weapon: The global rise of suicide bombings*. By Riaz Hassan. NY: Routledge, 2011.

“Global Terrorism Database.” National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland, 2014. <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>

“ICT Database for International Terrorist Attacks.” International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), IDC Herzliya, 2014. [http://212.150.54.123/inter\\_ter/attacksearch.cfm](http://212.150.54.123/inter_ter/attacksearch.cfm)

“RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents.” RAND Corporation, 2014.  
<http://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents.html>

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmed, Issam. "Another female suicide bomber strikes in Pakistan. Taliban desperation?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 11, 2011. Accessed April 12, 2014. <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2011/0811/Another-female-suicide-bomber-strikes-in-Pakistan.-Taliban-desperation>.
- Alami, Mona. "Women on the front lines." *NOW Lebanon*, February 15, 2014. Accessed February 24, 2014. <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/535456-women-on-the-front-lines>.
- Alexander, Yonah. *Palestinian Religious Terrorism: Hamas and Islamic Jihad*. Ardsley, NY: Transnational, 2002.
- Ali, Farhana. "Ready to Detonate: The Diverse Profiles of Female Bombers." *The MIPT Terrorism Annual 2006*. Oklahoma City, OK: National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, 2006: 43-52. Accessed October 21, 2013. <http://www.thebreakingnews.com/files/articles/2006-mipt-terrorism-annual.pdf>.
- "Al-mar'a wa al-rajal fee Philasteen: Qadayen wa ih saa'at [Women and Men in Palestine: Issues and Statistics]." *Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics*, 2012. Accessed: March 05, 2014. [http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_PCBS/Downloads/book1936.pdf](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book1936.pdf).
- Al-Ashtal, Amal. "Army of Roses: The Rise of Female Terrorism." Sheba Center for Strategic Studies, November, 2009. Accessed February 15, 2014. <http://www.shebacss.com/docs/PolicyFoucs/scssep009-09.pdf>
- "Al Qaeda in Iraq." International Terrorist Symbols Database. ADL, 2013. Accessed February 8, 2014. [http://archive.adl.org/terrorism/symbols/al\\_qaeda\\_iraq.html](http://archive.adl.org/terrorism/symbols/al_qaeda_iraq.html).
- Anthony, Augustine. "Pakistan Taliban Has 500 Suicide Bombers, Cleric Says." *Bloomberg News*, February 10, 2014. Accessed April 12, 2014. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-02-09/pakistan-taliban-readies-500-female-suicide-bombers-cleric-says.html>
- "The Avalon Project: Hamas Covenant 1988." *The Avalon Project : Hamas Covenant 1988-2008*. Accessed: April 5, 2014. [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/hamas.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp).
- Berko, Anat. *The Smarter Bomb: Women and Children as Suicide Bombers*. Lanham, MY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2012.
- Berko, Anat, Edna Erez, and Julie Globokar. "Gender, Crime and Terrorism: The Case of Arab/Palestinian Women in Israel." *The British Journal of Criminology* (2010): 670-689.

- Beyler, Clara. "Messengers of Death: Female Suicide Bombers." International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism. February 12, 2003. Accessed November 1, 2013. <http://212.150.54.123/articles/articledet.cfm?articleid=470>.
- . "A New Frontier in Terrorist Attacks?" *Huffington Post*, January 4, 2013. Accessed January 19, 2014. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/clara-beyler/counterterrorism\\_b\\_2410370.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/clara-beyler/counterterrorism_b_2410370.html).
- Bjelopera, Jerome P. "Countering Violent Extremism in the United States." *CRS Report Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress*, February 19, 2014. Accessed April 25, 2014. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homsec/R42553.pdf>
- Bloom, Mia. *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.
- . "Bombshells: Women and Terror." *Gender Issues* 28 (2011): 1-21. Accessed September 18, 2013. <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/60840799/bombshells-women-terror>.
- . "Women as Victims and Victimizers." US Department of State. May 11, 2007. Accessed September 17, 2013. <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/publication/2008/05/20080522172353srenod0.6383936.html#axzz2zSEIYkXd>.
- . "Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding." *Political Science Quarterly*, 119.1 (2004): 61-80.
- Burton, Fred and Scott Stewart. "On the Cusp: The Next Wave of Female Suicide Bombers?" *Security Weekly*. Stratfor, September 19, 2007. Accessed March 4, 2014. [http://www.stratfor.com/cusp\\_next\\_wave\\_female\\_suicide\\_bombers](http://www.stratfor.com/cusp_next_wave_female_suicide_bombers).
- Cook, David. "Women Fighting in Jihad?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, no. 5 (2005): 375-384. Accessed 18 September 2013. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10576100500180212>.
- Cook, David and Olivia Allison. *Understanding and Addressing Suicide Attacks: The Faith and Politics of Martyrdom Operations*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007.
- "Conflicting Arab Press Reactions to the Gaza Suicide Bombing". *MEMRI*. 27 January 2004. Accessed: March 13, 2014.
- Corcoran-Nantes, Yvonne. "Unnatural Beings: Gender and Terrorism." *Outskirts* 24 (May 2011). Accessed September 29, 2013. <http://www.outskirts.arts.uwa.edu.au/volumes/volume-24/corcoran-nantes>.
- Cragin, R. Kim and Sara A. Daly. *Women as Terrorists: Mothers, Recruiters, and Martyrs*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2009.

- Cunningham, Karla J. "Cross-Regional Trends in Female Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26, no. 3 (2003): 171-195. Accessed September 29, 2013. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10576100390211419>.
- . "Countering Female Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 2 (2007): 113-129. Accessed November 1, 2013. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10576100601101067>.
- . "Terror's 'invisible women.'" *Los Angeles Times*, April 4, 2012. Accessed February 5, 2014. <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/apr/04/opinion/la-oe-cunningham-women-jihadists-20120404>.
- Davis, Jessica. "Evolution of the Global *Jihad*: Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36 (2013): 279-291. Accessed January 19, 2014. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2013.763598>.
- . "Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq." Extremis Project, May 16, 2013. Accessed January 19, 2014. <http://extremisproject.org/2013/05/female-suicide-bombers-in-iraq/>.
- "Dressed to Kill: Why the number of female suicide bombers is rising in Iraq." *Newsweek*. July 29, 2008. Accessed September 29, 2013. <http://www.newsweek.com/commentary-why-women-become-suicide-bombers-93075?from=rss>.
- Gerwehr, Scott, and Sara Daly. "Al-Qaida: Terrorist Selection and Recruitment." *National Security Research Division*, RAND, 2006.
- Ghosh, Bobby. "The Mind of a Female Suicide Bomber." *Time*, June 22, 2008. Accessed October 21, 2013. <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1817158,00.html>.
- Gonzalez-Perez, Margaret. "The False Islamization of Female Suicide Bombers." *Gender Issues* 28 (2011): 50-65. Accessed December 29, 2013. <http://search.proquest.com.proxygw.wrlc.org/docview/868771925>
- Hafez, Mohammed M. *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2007.
- " Hamas Appoints First Spokeswoman." *Al Jazeera*, November 11, 2013. Accessed: April 24, 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/11/hamas-appoints-first-female-spokesperson-2013111013586831738.html>.
- " Hamas Spiritual Leader: We Don't Need Women Suicide Bombers." *AFP*, 02 Feb. 2002. Accessed: April 15, 2014. <http://www.beliefnet.com/News/2002/02/Hamas-Spiritual-Leaderwe-Dont-Need-Women-Suicide-Bombers.aspx#B411O2GhkHgq5udd.99>.
- " Hamas Woman Bomber Kills Israelis." *BBC News*. BBC, 14 Jan. 2004. Accessed: April 02, 2014. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/3395973.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3395973.stm).

- Hassan, Riaz. *Life as a Weapon: The global rise of suicide bombings*. NY: Routledge, 2011.
- Hegghammer, Thomas. "Number of foreign fighters from Europe in Syria is historically unprecedented. Who should be worried?" *The Washington Post*, November 27, 2013. Accessed April 25, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2013/11/27/number-of-foreign-fighters-from-europe-in-syria-is-historically-unprecedented-who-should-be-worried/>
- Holt, Maria. "The unlikely terrorist: women and Islamic resistance in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories." *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 3, no. 3 (December 2010): 365-382. Accessed December 29, 2013. [http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17539153.2010.521640#.U1QhA\\_ldWS0](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17539153.2010.521640#.U1QhA_ldWS0).
- "Iraq's 'female bomber recruiter.'" *BBC News*, February 4, 2009. Accessed April 9, 2014. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7869570.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7869570.stm).
- "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant." GlobalSecurity.org, 2014. Accessed February 8, 2014. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/aqi.htm>
- Jad, Islah. "Islamist women of Hamas: between feminism and nationalism" *Asia Cultural Studies*, 12. (2011): p. 195-201.
- Jaeger, David A., Esteban F. Klor, Sami H. Miaari, and M. Daniele Paserman. "The Struggle for Palestinian Hearts and Minds: Violence and Public Opinion in the Second Intifada." *Journal of Public Economics* 96.3-4 (2012): 354-68.
- Kimhi, Shaul, and Shemuel Even. "Response to "Who Are the Palestinian Suicide Bombers?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16.4 (2004): 915-840.
- Kingsbury, Alex. "The Rising Number of Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq." *US News*, July 28, 2008. Accessed October 21, 2013. <http://www.usnews.com/news/iraq/articles/2008/07/28/the-rising-number-of-female-suicide-bombers-in-iraq>.
- Lahoud, Nelly. *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction*. NY: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Laub, Zachary and Jonathan Masters. "Al-Qaeda in Iraq (a.k.a. Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria)." Council on Foreign Relations, January 9, 2014. Accessed January 27, 2014. <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/al-qaeda-iraq-azkzaz-islamic-state-iraq-greater-syria/p14811>.
- Levitt, Matthew. *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2006.
- Lewis, Jeffrey William. *The Business of Martyrdom: A History of Suicide Bombing*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012.

- McCarthy, Rory. "Woman, 64, Blows Herself up in Attack on Israeli Troops." *The Guardian*, November 23, 2006. Accessed: March 23, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/nov/24/israel>.
- McGreal, Chris. "Palestinians Shocked at Use of Suicide Mother." *The Guardian*, January 26, 2004. Accessed: April 25, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/jan/27/israel>.
- Moghadam, Valentine. "Development and Patriarchy: The Middle East and North Africa in Economic and Demographic Transition." *Wider Working Papers*. United Nations: World Institute for Development Economics Research, 1992.
- Mohammad, Ali. "Would-be Suicide Bomber Recalls Failed Mission." ICR Issue 348. Institute for War & Peace Reporting, August 5, 2010. Accessed April 9, 2014. <http://iwpr.net/report-news/would-be-suicide-bomber-recalls-failed-mission>.
- Miller, Judith. "The Bomb Under the Abaya." *Policy Review* 143 (Jun/Jul 2007): 43-58. Accessed December 29, 2013. <http://search.proquest.com.proxygw.wrlc.org/docview/216442907>.
- Mostarom, Tuty Raihanah. "Al Qaeda's Female Jihadists: The Islamist Ideological View." *RSIS Commentaries*. S. Rajaratham School of International Studies, February 6, 2009. Accessed February 24, 2014. <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/Perspective/RSIS0142009.pdf>
- Myers, Steven Lee. "Iraq Arrests Woman Tied to Bombings." *The New York Times*, February 3, 2009. Accessed April 9, 2014. [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/04/world/middleeast/04iraq.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/04/world/middleeast/04iraq.html?_r=0).
- Ness, Cindy D., ed. *Female Terrorism and Militancy: Agency, utility, and organization*. NY: Routledge, 2008.
- O'Rourke, Lindsey. "Behind the Woman Behind the Bomb." *The New York Times*, August 2, 2008. Accessed February 3, 2014. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/02/opinion/02orourke.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/02/opinion/02orourke.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).
- . "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" *Security Studies* 18, no. 4. (December 2009): 681-718. Accessed October 1, 2013. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09636410903369084>.
- Patkin, Terri Toles. "Explosive Baggage: Female Palestinian Suicide Bombers and the Rhetoric of Emotion." *Women and Language* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 79-88. Accessed December 29, 2013. <http://search.proquest.com.proxygw.wrlc.org/docview/198814591>
- Pedahzur, Ami, ed. *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The globalization of martyrdom*. NY: Routledge, 2006.

- Peranio, Kevin. "Flexing Their Muscles." *Newsweek*, April, 9 2009. Accessed: April 25, 2014. <http://www.newsweek.com/flexing-their-muscles-119085>.
- Peteet, Julie. "Women and the Palestinian Movement: No Going Back?". In Saud Joseph and Susan Slyomovics (ed), *Women and Power in the Middle East*. (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 2001): p.135-150.
- Pflanz, Mike. "Somalia's prime minister narrowly escapes female suicide bomber." *The Telegraph*, April 4, 2012. Accessed April 12, 2014. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/somalia/9186566/Somalias-prime-minister-narrowly-escapes-female-suicide-bomber.html>
- "The Qaradawi Fatwas." *The Middle East Quarterly* XI.3 Summer, 2004: 78-80. Accessed April 23, 2014. <http://www.meforum.org/646/the-qaradawi-fatwas>.
- Rajan, V.G. Julie. *Women Suicide Bombers: Narratives of Violence*. NY: Routledge, 2011.
- Regular, Aaron. "Mother of Two Becomes First Female Suicide Bomber for Hamas," *Haaretz*, January 16, 2004.
- Roggio, Bill. "Female suicide bomber from Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin strikes in Kabul." *The Long War Journal*, September 18, 2012. Accessed April 12, 2014. [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/09/female\\_suicide\\_bombe\\_6.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/09/female_suicide_bombe_6.php)
- . "Female suicide bomber strikes in Peshawar." *The Long War Journal*, August 11, 2011. Accessed April 12, 2014. [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/08/female\\_suicide\\_bombe\\_5.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/08/female_suicide_bombe_5.php)
- Rosner, Yotam, Einav Yogev, and Yoram Schweitzer. *INSS Insight No. 507: A Report on Suicide Bombings in 2013*. 14 January 2014.
- Rubin, Alissa J. "Despair Drives Suicide Attacks by Iraqi Women." *The New York Times*, July 5, 2008. Accessed April 9, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/05/world/middleeast/05diyala.html?pagewanted=all&r=2&>.
- Sageman, Marc. *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
- Schweitzer, Yoram, ed. "Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality?" Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2006. Accessed September 2013. <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lng=en&id=91112>.
- . "Palestinian Istishhadia: A Developing Instrument." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30.8 (2007): 667-89.



- Al-Shanqiti, Shaykh Abu al-Mundhir. "Sharoot Kharooj al-mar'a lil jihad (Conditions for Women Going Out for Jihad)." *Jihadology*. Accessed January 5, 2014. <http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/shaykh-abc5ab-al-mundhir-al-shanqc4abe1b9adc4ab-conditions-for-women-going-out-for-jihc481d.pdf>
- Sjoberg, Laura, and Caron E. Gentry. *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women's Violence in Global Politics*. London: Zed, 2007.
- Sjoberg, Laura, and Caron E. Gentry. *Women, Gender, and Terrorism*. Athens: U of Georgia, 2011.
- Skaine, Rosemarie. *Female Suicide Bombers*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2006.
- Sofer, Ken and Jennifer Addison. "The Unaddressed Threat of Female Suicide Bombers: Women Terrorists are an Increasing Problem." *American Progress*. January 5, 2012. Accessed October 21, 2013. <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2012/01/05/10992/the-unaddressed-threat-of-female-suicide-bombers/>.
- Speckhard, Anne. "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 11 (2008): 995-1023. Accessed 21 October 2013. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10576100802408121>.
- . "Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq." *Democracy and Security* 5 (2009): 19-50.
- "Suicide bombings by women in Iraq." *Christian Science Monitor*, August 17, 2006. Accessed October 21, 2013. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0817/p12s01-woiq.html>.
- "Suicide sisterhood: Al-Qaida's female bombers." *UPI*, February 2, 2010. Accessed April 9, 2014. [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/Special/2010/02/02/Suicide-sisterhood-Al-Qaidas-female-bombers/UPI-46951265138828/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2010/02/02/Suicide-sisterhood-Al-Qaidas-female-bombers/UPI-46951265138828/).
- Ungerleider, Neal. "Close Reading al Qaeda's Latest Jihadist Women's Emagazine (Yes, Latest)." *Fast Company*. March 15, 2011. Accessed March 1, 2014. <http://www.fastcompany.com/1738605/close-reading-al-qaedas-latest-jihadist-womens-emagazine-yes-latest>.
- USAID. *Iraq: Economic Recovery Assessment*. February 2009. Accessed March 17, 2014. <http://egateg.usaidallnet.gov/resources/220>
- Van der Ploeg, Rick, Anthony J Venables, and Samuel Wills. "Oil and Fiscal Policy in Iraq." Oxcarre, Department of Economics, University of Oxford, 2012. Accessed March 17, 2014. <http://www.oxcarre.ox.ac.uk/index.php/Policy-Papers/policy-papers.html>.

Von Knop, Katharina. "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 5 (2007): 397-414. Accessed September 18, 2013. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10576100701258585>.

The White House. "National Strategy for Counterterrorism." Washington, DC, June 2011. Accessed November 7, 2013. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism_strategy.pdf).

Wright, Robin. "Since 2001, a Dramatic Increase in Suicide Bombings." *Washington Post*, April, 18, 2008. Accessed February 26, 2014. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/17/AR2008041703595\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/17/AR2008041703595_pf.html)

Al-Zawahiri, Umayma. "Risala ila al-akhawat al-muslimat (Letter to My Muslim Sisters)." Jihadica. Accessed March 5, 2014. <http://www.jihadica.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/umayma-al-zawahiri-risala-jan-2010.pdf>

Zedalis, Debra D. *Female Suicide Bombers*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, June 2004. Accessed October 21, 2013. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/pub408.pdf>.