

# Martyrdom in Jihad

versus

# Suicide Bombing

by Ben Adam

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## Glossary

<i>ahl</i>	people; qualified adherents
<i>āthār</i>	recorded narrations or sayings of the Prophet's Companions ﷺ
<i>āyah</i>	a verse of the Quran; lit. a sign (pl. <i>āyāt</i> )
<i>fard 'ayn</i>	an individual obligation or duty
<i>fard kifāya</i>	a collective, communal obligation or duty
<i>fatwa</i>	a legal Islamic verdict or ruling (pl. <i>fatāwa</i> )
<i>fiqh</i>	understanding, comprehension, jurisprudence
<i>fitna</i>	trial and tribulation
<i>fitra</i>	the natural Islamic disposition of man (and woman)
<i>ghazwa</i>	a military campaign of the Prophet ﷺ (pl. <i>ghazawāt</i> )
<i>hadīth</i>	a narration recording a saying, action, tacit approval, habit or physical description of the Prophet ﷺ (pl. <i>ahādīth</i> )
<i>halāl</i>	that which is permissible, lawful in Islam
<i>harām</i>	that which is impermissible, forbidden, unlawful in Islam
<i>Iblīs</i>	Satan, the devil, by his proper noun, equivalent to Diablos
<i>imān</i>	correct belief or faith in Allah, His Angels, His Books, the Prophets, the Hereafter and the Divine Decree
<i>iqtibām</i>	the act of a lone warrior charging a far more numerous enemy
<i>jamā'a</i>	the united body of orthodox Muslims
<i>jihād</i>	striving in the cause of Allah
<i>jihādi</i>	one who goes to extremes in the concept of <i>jihād</i> , is excessively enthusiastic about it, and holds a distorted idea of it that is more akin to terrorism (Anglicised: jihadist)

<i>jinn</i>	a demon, spirit-being created from smokeless fire
<i>khawārij</i>	lit. <i>renegades</i> : the first sect to break away from the main body of Muslims; they were characterised by their excessive <i>takfir</i> and violent rebellions (Anglicised: kharijites)
<i>kufr</i>	disbelief, infidelity
<i>kuffār</i>	non-Muslims, disbelievers, infidels
<i>madhhab</i>	school of jurisprudence
<i>manhaj</i>	methodology
<i>mujāhid</i>	one engaged in jihad (pl. <i>mujāhidūn</i> , <i>mujāhidīn</i> )
<i>qiyās</i>	analogy, comparative deduction; drawing analogy with a text of Quran or the <i>Sunna</i> in order to establish a legal verdict
<i>sabīh</i>	authentic – the highest grade of reliability of a <i>hadīth</i>
<i>Salaf (as-Sālih)</i>	the (pious) predecessors; the Prophet's Companions ﷺ and the two immediate generations of Muslims that followed
<i>salafi</i>	a Muslim who follows the Quran and the <i>Sunna</i> upon the understanding of the <i>Salaf</i>
<i>shari'a</i>	the Divine Legislation of Islam
<i>Sunna</i>	the inspired practice of the Prophet ﷺ, his real-life exemplification of the Quran as recorded in the <i>ahādīth</i>
<i>Sura</i>	any one of the 114 chapters of the Quran
<i>takfir</i>	to accuse someone of major <i>kufr</i> or disbelief; to eject a Muslim from the fold of Islam
<i>takfiri</i>	one who goes to extremes in performing <i>takfir</i>
<i>tatarrus</i>	to employ oneself or others as a human shield during combat
<i>umma</i>	the Muslim world community; all of humanity to whom the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was sent

## Prayers and Salutations

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ

**Allah sends His Graces and Blessings on the Prophet and also His angels too (ask Allah to bless and forgive him). O you who believe, (you too invoke Allah’s) Graces and Blessings upon him\***

صَلَّى

*sal-Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* – “may Allah send (heavenly salutations of) peace and blessings upon him,” said after the mention of the Prophet Muhammad

السَّلَامِ

*‘alayhi as-Salām* – “upon him be Allah’s Peace,” after mentioning any Prophet of God

رَضِيَ

*radhī Allāhu ‘anhu* – “Allah be pleased with him,” after the mention of a Companion of the Prophet ﷺ

رَضِيَ

*radhī Allāhu ‘anhum* – “Allah be pleased with them,” after the mention of several Companions of the Prophet ﷺ

سُبْحَانَ

*Subhānahu wa Ta‘āla* – “Glorified and Exalted be He,” after the mention of Allah

عَظِيمٍ

*‘Aẓīma wa Jall* – “Honoured and Majestic,” after mentioning Allah

جَلِيلٍ

*Jalla Jalālahu* – “Majestic in His Majesty,” after mentioning Allah

Salutations have been given in their Arabic forms so as not to clutter the text with lengthy Latin transliteration, and to also maintain flow for non-Muslims. The original Arabic text of the Quran is also given both for its aesthetic appeal and to provide Muslim readers further opportunity for reward from the Creator ﷻ. As the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: “Whoever reads a letter from the Book of Allah will be rewarded (in the Hereafter) – and that reward will be multiplied tenfold...” †

\* The Quran, Sura al-Ahzāb [33]:56.

† An authentic *hadith* from the collection of at-Tirmidhi.

## Preface

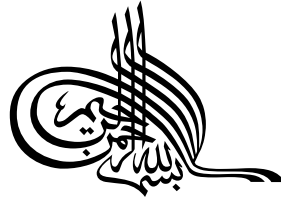
Three years ago, an early skeletal draft of this document, then titled: *Martyrdom Operations vs. Suicide Bombings*, was published online on various websites. Eventually, one version of the essay with the title *Martyrdom in Islam versus Suicide Bombings* was uploaded onto [scribd.com](https://www.scribd.com). One [scribd.com](https://www.scribd.com) user, NidalHasan, appeared to take exception with the overall orientation of the essay.

On November 5, 2009, a Muslim U.S. Army psychiatrist of the same name, Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, opened fire at the U.S.'s most populous military base at Fort Hood in Texas, killing thirteen of his army colleagues and injuring a further twenty-nine in the process.

The Fort Hood massacre was the worst such shooting of its kind in American history and would certainly have been much worse but for the aggressor himself being shot down by the civilian police officers, Senior Sergeant Mark Todd and Officer Kimberly Munley.

Attempting to profile Nidal Hasan and better understand his motives, media reports revealed that the army major had been influenced by radical Islamic websites and had posted extremist views in favour of suicide bombing. Nidal's cyber activity had even drawn the concern of U.S. federal law enforcement. Bizarrely, the original uploaded draft of this paper formed the basis of some of those media allegations. Nidal Hasan was even suspected of being its author!

Had those investigating journalists, pundits and bloggers made the effort to read through the essay, they might well have concluded that it is the extremist polemic which this text is attempting to repudiate that was the more probable recruiting sergeant for Maj. Nidal Hasan's radicalisation.



## Introduction

Martyrdom in the path of Allah is from the greatest of deeds, the reward of which is no less than Paradise. Suicide, on the other hand, is from the most reprehensible of deeds, the reward of which is no less than Hellfire. In the history of Islam, the learned men and women of the faith have never confused the two. It is only with the proliferation of suicide bombing in our time that the clear distinction between suicide and martyrdom has become marred as the former is being justified with the textual support for the latter.

The essay alternatively titled *The Islamic Ruling on the Permissibility of Martyrdom Operations* and *Did Hava Barayev Commit Suicide or achieve Martyrdom*<sup>1</sup> is a famous case in point. Citing many classical Islamic texts, largely, though not exclusively, relating to the battlefield jihad of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions رضي الله عنهم, the essay attempts to prove the Islamic legitimacy of suicide bombing, or so-called martyrdom operations. This rebuttal does not seek to argue with those Islamic evidences *per sé*, but to point out their complete misrepresentation.

Maj. Nidal Hasan, the U.S. army psychiatrist charged with the Fort Hood Shooting, posted a comment online to an earlier publication of this rebuttal to the aforementioned essay. That comment is also discussed in light of the texts of the Quran and the *Sunna*.

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<sup>1</sup> Written in defence of the actions of the female Chechen suicide bomber, Hava Barayev, the essay [available [here](#)] is attributed to the leading Saudi Al-Qaeda ideologist Yusuf al-Ayiri (aka Abu Qutayba al-Makki). Al-Ayiri, who had been a bodyguard for Usama bin Laden, was killed in a manhunt in Hail, northern Saudi Arabia, in 2003. The same evidences cited by al-Ayiri in favour of suicide bombing are repeated throughout other *takfiri* and jihadi writings on the subject.

## Suicide versus Martyrdom

First, it may be helpful to outline the grievousness of the crime of suicide itself. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who refused to pray over the one who had committed suicide,<sup>2</sup> warned:

Whoever kills himself will certainly be punished in Hellfire, where he shall dwell forever.<sup>3</sup>

And he ﷺ, who was the Seal of the Prophets, also said:

He who kills himself with anything, Allah will torment him with that in the Hellfire.<sup>4</sup>

And he ﷺ, who was sent as a mercy to the worlds, also said:

Among those before you, there was a man in anguish from his wound. So he took a knife and cut his hands until he bled to death. Allah said: *“My servant has hastened the ending of his life, so I forbid the Paradise for him.”*<sup>5</sup>

And Allah ﷻ said in the Quran:

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَظُلْمًا  
فَسَوْفَ نُصَلِّيهِ نَارًا وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا

**And do not kill yourselves. (For) surely, Allah is Most Merciful unto you. And whoever commits that through aggression and injustice, We shall cast him into the Fire, and that is easy for Allah.**<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Sabih Muslim.*

<sup>3</sup> *Sabih al-Bukhari and Sabih Muslim.*

<sup>4</sup> *Sabih al-Bukhari, hadith no. 6047 and Sabih Muslim, hadith no. 176.*

<sup>5</sup> *Sabih al-Bukhari, hadith no. 1364 and Sabih Muslim, hadith no. 180.*

<sup>6</sup> The Quran, Sura an-Nisā' [4]:29-30.



And He ﷺ also said in the Quran:

وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ وَأَحْسِنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

**And do not cause your hands to contribute to your own destruction; but do good. Truly, Allah loves the good-doers.**<sup>7</sup>

Second, martyrdom in Islam is a broad theme of which the battlefield martyr is but one manifestation. Abu Hurayra رضي الله عنه narrated that Allah's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

Five are regarded as martyrs: those who die as a result of plague, abdominal disease, drowning, a falling building, and the martyrs (who are slain whilst fighting) in Allah's Cause.<sup>8</sup>

The third matter to direct the reader's attention to is the difference between:

- a) an act of violence which involves a suicide, such as a suicide bombing, and
- b) an act of war which is apparently suicidal, such is a lone warrior charging the ranks of the enemy in the near-certain – never one hundred per cent certain – knowledge that he will be killed in the process.<sup>9</sup>

No scholar disputes the praiseworthiness of the second type of act. It is only the first type of act, that is, the predetermined, intentional taking of ones own life in a clear act of suicide, which remains a subject of contention.

In fact, prior to the suicide bombing of our time, there is no precedent whatsoever in the history of Islam of the Sunni Muslim being praised for willfully taking his or her own life on or off the battlefield – whatever the intention.

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<sup>7</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Baqara [2]:195.

<sup>8</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari* (4/82).

<sup>9</sup> The bold attack of a one-man-army is known as *iqtibam*, the objective of which is to slay as much of the enemy as possible whilst seeking victory or martyrdom, inspiring and rousing other Muslim soldiers to advance courageously and instilling within the enemy's ranks fear and awe.

## The Origins of Suicide Bombing

The contention, that the term “suicide bombing” is one invented by “disbelievers” and their “Jew-controlled media” in order to vilify the “mujahideen” and should therefore be abandoned is rather weak and self-defeating.

Suicide bombings themselves are the invention of non-Muslims. For a long while, the only nominally-Muslim group that utilized the tactic was the heterodoxical Shia, a sect which has innovated an entire calendar of rituals commemorating martyrdom. And considering how Shiism is, ultimately, a death cult – and the only Mecca-facing confession to consider self-flagellation an act of Godliness – the Shia’s raising of suicide bombing to the rank of martyrdom is not a surprising regression. It is only recently, in the footsteps of the Shia,<sup>10</sup> that some so-called Sunni Muslims have gained infamy for suicide bombing.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Iran had been a bastion of orthodox Sunni Islam for over a thousand years. It was only thanks to the non-Iranic Turkoman Safavids who entered Persia following the disruption caused by their fellow Altaic invaders, the Mongol-Tatars of Chingis Khan, that Shiism eventually became Iran’s religion of state – although it took several centuries of repression before the indigenous Persian Sunni majority became a minority. Even today, Iran’s first family of theocratic rulers, headed by the Supreme Leader and Grand Ayatollah, Ali Khamenei, are not Persians, but ethnic Turks of Azeri extraction. Their grip on power is supported by a monetary tax that the ruling Shia clergy claiming descent from the Prophet’s family have traditionally levied from the ordinary masses. This tax is justified via a scandalous misinterpretation of the Quran, Sura al-Anfal [8], *ayah* 41:

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ خُمُسَهُ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

**And know that whatever of booty that you may gain, indeed one-fifth of it is assigned to Allah and to the Messenger, and to the (Messenger’s) near relatives**

Further east, the principal non-Aryan element of today’s Afghanistan remains the Shia community of Hazaras. Hazara means “one thousand” in the local Farsi vernacular and the now Farsi-speaking but still very much Mongol-looking Hazaras are so-named because they descend from a one-thousand-strong garrison of Mongols who remained behind following Chingis Khan’s devastating raids into Tranoxania (Mawarannahr), Aryana (Khurasan) and Persia.

<sup>11</sup> The actual chronological chain of suicide bombing looks something like this: Japanese Kamikaze (Shintoist) → Tamil Tiger separatists (Marxist Hindu) → Hezbollah, Amal (Rafidhi Shia) → Baathists, PKK (Communists) → Islamic Jihad (Palestinian neo-Shia) → HAMAS (Ikhwani “Sunni” Muslims) → Al-Qaeda (Kharijites - nominally Sunni).

## The Ascription of Martyrdom

At least the Shia commemorate the deaths of true martyrs: the lion of Islam, ‘Ali bin Abi Tālib عليه السلام, who was the fourth best Muslim of the *umma* after the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, his cousin and son-in-law and the first youth to believe in him.

Also, one of the lion cubs of ‘Ali, Husayn عليه السلام,<sup>12</sup> who was ‘Ali’s second son through his marriage to Fatima, daughter of Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, is rightly considered by the Shia to be a martyr.

In fact, all the Companions of Allah’s Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم who died in the battlefield jihad, or who were otherwise killed by their enemies, are heralded as bona fide martyrs. And that is because Allah جل جلاله and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم testified to the condition of their true faith in the divine texts of Islam.

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<sup>12</sup> Husayn عليه السلام, along with his older brother, Hasan عليه السلام, were the two most beloved of the Prophet’s صلى الله عليه وسلم grandsons and described by him as: “*The leaders of the youths of Paradise.*” [A *sahih hadith* recorded by at-Tirmidhi, Ahmad and at-Tabarāni]

‘Ali عليه السلام named other sons of his Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān in honour of the three noble companions who were the first, second, and third caliphs of Islam respectively. This was a most significant choice of names when considering the very *raison d’etre* of Shiism...

The Shia sect was started by ‘Abdullah bin Sabā’, a Medinan Jew who feigned Islam in order to subvert the religion from within. Ibn Sabā’ encouraged the growth of a cult around the personality of ‘Ali عليه السلام, even deifying him, and contended that succession to the leadership of the Muslims should remain within the Prophet Muhammad’s صلى الله عليه وسلم immediate household.

However, after ‘Ali عليه السلام ascended to the leadership of the *umma*, becoming Islam’s fourth rightly-guided caliph, he exiled Ibn Sabā’, executed his followers and responded to the subversive Shia propaganda, which was then still at an embryonic stage, by mounting the pulpit to announce: “*I will flog anyone who claims that I am better than Abu Bakr and ‘Umar – for I consider this to be slander.*”

Also, when one of the son’s of ‘Ali عليه السلام asked him: “*Which of the people is best after the Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم?*” ‘Ali عليه السلام responded: “*Abu Bakr*” The inquisitive son asked: “*Then whom?*” ‘Ali said: “*Then ‘Umar.*” [‘Ali’s son continued:] “*And I feared he would say ‘Uthmān (next, so), I then said: Then you?*” ‘Ali said, in all modesty: “*I am but a man from the Muslims.*” [Sahih al-Bukhārī, hadith no. 3671]

Allah ﷻ says in the Quran:

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأُولُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ  
اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا  
ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

**And the foremost (in faith) from the Muhājirūn<sup>13</sup> and the Ansār<sup>14</sup> and also those who imitated them in goodness. Allah is well-pleased with them as they are well-pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens (in Paradise) under which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme success.<sup>15</sup>**

Anyone ascribing martyrdom for other than those explicitly described as such by the Prophet ﷺ or for other than those who were known to have been killed as one of his illustrious Companions ﷺ is claiming knowledge of the unseen.

Allah ﷻ says in the Quran:

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ

**He (Allah alone) knows what happens to them (His creatures) in this world and what will happen to them in the Hereafter. And they will never compass anything of His Knowledge except that which He wills.<sup>16</sup>**

The Prophet ﷺ mentioned how the first person to be cast into Hellfire will be the insincere martyr. In a *hadith* that contains a great admonition against destroying one's deeds through pride and ostentation, the Companion, Abu Hurayra رضي الله عنه, related that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

<sup>13</sup> Those Companions who migrated from Mecca and elsewhere to Medina.

<sup>14</sup> The Companions at Medina who aided the Prophet ﷺ and the Muhājirūn.

<sup>15</sup> The Quran, Sura at-Tawba [9]:100.

<sup>16</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Baqara [2]:255.

The first of people against whom judgment will be pronounced on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who died a martyr. He will be brought and Allah will make known to him His favours and he will recognise them. [Allah, Most High] will say: *“And what did you do about them?”* He will say: *“I fought for you until I died a martyr.”* He will say: *“You have lied – you did but fight that it might be said [of you]: ‘He is courageous.’ And so it was said.”* Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into the Hellfire. [Another] will be a man who has studied [religious] knowledge and has taught it and who used to recite the Quran. He will be brought [forth] and Allah will make known to him His favours and he will recognise them. [Allah, the Almighty] will say: *“And what did you do about them?”* He [the man] will say: *“I studied knowledge and I taught it and I recited the Quran for Your sake.”* He will say: *“You have lied – you did but study [religious] knowledge that it might be said [of you]: ‘He is learned.’ And you recited the Quran that it might be said [of you]: ‘He is a reciter.’ And so it was said.”* Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into the Hellfire. [Another] will be a man whom Allah had made rich and to whom He had given all kinds of wealth. He will be brought [forth] and Allah will make known to him His favours and he will recognise them. [Allah Most High] will say: *“And what did you do about them?”* He [the man] will say: *“I left no path [untrodden] in which You like money to be spent without spending in it for Your sake.”* He [Allah, the Almighty] will say: *“You have lied – you did but do so that it might be said [of you]: ‘He is open-handed.’ And so it was said.”* Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire.<sup>17</sup>

So, if it is unlawful to ascribe martyrdom to someone who dies by legitimate means because their precise intention at the moment of their death is unknown, what then is to be said for honouring as martyrs those whose intention is not only unknown, but who purposefully kill themselves?

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<sup>17</sup> A *hadith qudsi* related by Muslim, at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasā’i.

## The Efficacy of Suicide Bombing

In the long term, suicide bombing proves to be a redundant military tactic at best and wholly counter-productive at worst. And this is due to military-targeted suicide bombing following a law of diminishing returns.

In essence, suicide bombing relies upon the element of surprise and penetration. Once the enemy becomes wise to the tactic, it becomes militarily ineffective. Instead, anyone or anything perceived as a potential threat approaching the perimeter of a military target is fired upon. Many innocent civilians have been killed this way, on the mere suspicion that they were suicide bombers.

Hence, the overwhelming majority of suicide attacks are carried out against what are referred to in military parlance as “soft targets”: women shopping in marketplace bazaars, commuters travelling in buses or waiting in bus cues, employees in their offices, and so on. This is certainly the case in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan where the heretical *takfiri* ideology of the bomber makes the blood of innocent Muslim men, women and children worthy of spilling – even while they are worshipping alongside other believers in mosques, or fasting during the sacred month of Ramadan!

As regards U.S. military losses in Iraq, they have almost all been as a consequence of IEDs<sup>18</sup> and small-arm skirmishes. Incidentally, it was also thanks to losses incurred from remotely-detonated roadside bombs that the Israelis were forced to give up south Lebanon.

Staying with Lebanon, all the fights that were won there against the Jewish state were done so through conventional military means. In 2006, for example, Hezbollah inflicted severe losses on the Israelis without offering a single suicide bombing. It is as if the Shia have abandoned the tactic they once championed after they passed it on to the poor Palestinians!

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<sup>18</sup> IEDs: improvised explosive devices; essentially remotely-detonated or self-detonating roadside bombs.

As for Chechnya, during the First Chechen War of 1994-1996, which the Chechens actually won, suicide bombing was not utilized at all. The ongoing Second Chechen War which has been waged since 1999 has seen a proliferation of suicide bombing, but to an ever-diminishing affect and in an increasingly desperate and futile war.<sup>19</sup>

Also in Bosnia, Kosovo, the Soviet-Afghan war, and during the pre-9/11 Kashmir insurrection, the Muslims won their victories without ever employing suicide bombing.

Finally, the jihadists' favouring if not near-total dependance upon the tactic of suicide bombing should be understood for what it really is: an admission of their own military impotence. It is as if the suicide bombing proponants are saying:

As Allah has denied us the means and ability to wage real, effective jihad, the type of jihad that He loves –

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ صَفًّا كَانَهُمْ بُنْيَانٌ مَّرْصُومٌ

**Verily, Allah loves those who fight in His Cause in formations, as if they were a (single) solid structure.**<sup>20</sup>

– asymmetric warfare<sup>21</sup> is the only path left to us.

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<sup>19</sup> Essentially, what we have in Chechnya now is a fratricidal war between “mujahideen” and “former mujahideen”; a war whose allegiances have reverted back to tribal and sectarian affiliations. Both sides accusing the other of apostasy in order to justify the bloodshed, much like the *fitna* of post-Soviet Afghanistan.

<sup>20</sup> The Quran, Sura as-Saff [61]:4.

<sup>21</sup> Which, in this case, equates to terrorism.

## The Ruling on Suicide Bombing

As to the permissibility of suicide bombings as a tactic of jihad specifically, Islam's most learned scholars have reached a consensus of sorts. *Of sorts* because even if one learned Muslim, after sincerely researching the issue, were to come to the conclusion that suicide bombing can be allowed under certain scenarios and circumstances, then he or she should not be chastised for holding that heart-felt informed opinion. As the great jurist, Ibn Muflih al-Hanbali, wrote: "*Chastisement (of one's opponents) is not allowed in issues in where there is a difference of opinion.*"<sup>22</sup>

It just so happens, however, that practically all senior orthodox Sunni scholars hold suicide bombing to be *harām*. While practically all those who endorse suicide bombings happen to be deviants affected by or openly advocating some or other *takfīri* or extremist Ikhwāni or Deobandi methodology.

From the most senior of Sunni scholars to outrightly condemn suicide bombing was Shaykh Muhammad Sālih bin Uthaymīn. Ibn Uthaymīn held suicide bombing to be *harām* in absolute terms because the tactic rests upon something which is itself *harām* in absolute terms (i.e. suicide):

As for what some people do regarding activities of suicide, tying explosives to themselves and then approaching non-Muslims and detonating them amongst them, then this is a case of suicide; and Allah's refuge is sought. So whoever commits suicide then he will be consigned eternally to Hellfire, remaining there forever, as occurs in the *hadīth* of the Prophet, saying: "*And whoever kills himself with an iron weapon, then the iron weapon will remain in his hand, and he will continuously stab himself in his belly with it in the Fire of Hell eternally, forever and ever.*"<sup>23 24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibn Muflih in *Al-Ādāb ash-Shar'īyya*.

<sup>23</sup> Reported by al-Bukhāri, *hadīth* no. 5778 and Muslim, *hadīth* no. 109.

<sup>24</sup> Shaykh Muhammad Sālih bin Uthaymīn in *Sharh Riyādh-us-Sālihīn* (1/124).



The *muhaddith*,<sup>25</sup> Shaykh Abdul-Muhsin al-Abbād, arguably the greatest living authority on the *Sunna* of Allah's Messenger ﷺ, authored a book which he titled: *With which Intellect and Religion Can Suicide Bombings and Destruction be Considered Jihad?!* Like Ibn Uthaymīn, al-Abbād feels no imperative to judge suicide bombings on a case-by-case basis because, as far as he is concerned, suicide can never be permissible in any application or intention.

The theological position of Shaykh Sālih bin Fawzān al-Fawzān on suicide bombing is similarly obvious from the title of one of his short treatises on the subject: *Suicide is not martyrdom, killing a non-Muslim under protection is not jihad, and changing the name of something does not change its reality!*

Imam Muhammad Nāsir ad-Dīn al-Albāni, considered by his contemporaries to be the *Muhaddith* of the Era par excellence, is often presented as the notable exception amongst the orthodox Sunni scholars to have permitted so-called martyrdom operations under certain conditions and prerequisites. However, because those conditions and prerequisites are absent – most notably, a single temporal Islamic authority or *kehalifa* over all Muslims who can weigh the military merits of such an act and exploit its benefits – al-Albāni held not only suicide bombing, but even seemingly suicidal attacks to be *harām*.<sup>26</sup>

We say suicide operations, now, in the present times, all of them are without legislation and all of them are forbidden. It could be that the person who commits it could fall into the category of those who remain in Hellfire forever, or it could be that he does not remain in the Hellfire forever... We know how fighting was in the past, with swords, spears (and the like). And this fighting, in those days would resemble (an act of) suicide. For example, when you get one soldier facing several soldiers from

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<sup>25</sup> One who has gained mastery in the sciences of *hadīth*, being qualified to assess their authenticity, derive legal rulings from them, and often memorising a huge volume of them.

<sup>26</sup> It was due to the same consideration – the absence of the *kehalifa* – that al-Albāni also held that obligatory jihad (i.e. *jihād fard 'ayn*) does not exist in this day and age and those who declare it or claim to wage it do so without legitimate Islamic authority.

the enemy army of idolaters and he attacks them left and right... and there is little chance of him surviving this. We say about this, that in one way it is allowed and in another it is not... (Depending on) whether the Islamic ruler or the caliph of the Muslims permits. Because, the leader of the Muslims has to take into account the welfare of his people. The *kehalifa* of the Muslims should try to understand the situation as best of possible. He would understand when it is required for one hundred Muslim soldiers to fight one thousand of the polytheists... or less than that or more, and he calculates how many of them will perish – that is, tens of them will die, etc., but he will know the end result will be victory for the Muslims.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, not only did Imam al-Albāni agree with other Sunni scholars on the prohibition of suicide bombing, he also considered the apparently suicidal charge of a lone warrior against larger enemy formations, as evidenced in the *abādīth*, to be impermissible unless specifically sanctioned by the supreme Muslim ruler. Thus, although al-Albāni did not hold what he termed “sacrificial operations” to be *harām* in absolute terms, he did hold them *harām* in *relative* terms.

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<sup>27</sup> Al-Albāni in *Al-Fatāwa al-Muhima fī Tabsīr-il-Umma*, p. 76.

## The Prohibition of Targeting Non-Combatants

Regardless of which informed position a person takes on suicide bombing, what is indisputable is that Islam unequivocally forbids the targeting of non-combatants during times of war or peace. An act of violence, suicidal or otherwise, against innocent or otherwise peaceful men, women and children is, simply, terrorism.

Once, when news reached the Prophet ﷺ that children had been killed in a battle, he exclaimed: “*What is with some people that the killing today caused them to go so far as to kill children?!*” Someone answered: “*O Messenger of Allah! They are but children of polytheists!*” The Prophet ﷺ replied:

Nay! Verily, the best of you are children of polytheists. Do not kill children! (I say again,) do not kill children! For every soul is born upon the *fitra* (i.e. innocent, monotheistic and good) – until its tongue speaks on its behalf...<sup>28</sup>

Also, when the Prophet ﷺ once passed an idolatress who had fallen during a battle, he denounced her killing, insisting that the woman was not one against whom war was to be fought.<sup>29</sup> He then instructed the other Companions:

Go and catch up with (the commander) Khālid and tell him to kill neither posterity (i.e. a women or children) nor a prisoner.<sup>30</sup>

And Ibn Umar رضي الله عنه related:

A woman was found killed in one of the battles of the Prophet ﷺ, so (he) the Messenger of Allah (expressly) prohibited the killing of women and children.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Musnad Ahmad*.

<sup>29</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*.

<sup>30</sup> Recorded in *Musnad Ahmad* and *Sunan Abu Dawūd*.

<sup>31</sup> Recorded by al-Bukhāri, Muslim, Abu Dāwūd, at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Māja.

Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه, the Prophet's closest friend, father-in-law and immediate temporal successor, admonished the Muslim army with the following words:

Halt, O people, that I may give you ten rules for your guidance in the battlefield. Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to trees, nor burn them, especially those which are fruitful. Slay not any of the enemy's flock, save for your food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them alone.

Allah سبحانه وتعالى said in the Quran:

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ  
أَنْ تَبْرُوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

**Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion, nor drove you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity.**<sup>32</sup>

These Islamic precepts which extol the sanctity of human life...

النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ

**life, which Allah has made sacred**<sup>33</sup>

...are flagrantly violated by to the most vociferous proponents of suicide bombing such as Al-Qaeda and other *takfiri*-jihadis who almost exclusively encourage and justify the murder of non-combatants, regardless of their religion, age or gender.

<sup>32</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Mumtahina [60]:8.

<sup>33</sup> The Quran, Sura al-An'ām [6]:151.

Allah ﷻ admonishes in the Quran:

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ  
الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا  
لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

Then your hearts became hardened after that, like stones or even harder. For indeed there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unaware of what you do.<sup>34</sup>

Although the most audacious and spectacular of all terrorist atrocities occurred in North America on September 11, 2001, an arguably more abhorrent and sadistic outrage was executed in the North Caucasus on September 1, 2004.

The horrific suicidal siege of Beslan School Number One, in North Ossetia, resulted in the death of over 330 hostages, including 186 children, many if not most of them from Muslim families.

Allah ﷻ warns in the Quran:

وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهُ  
وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا

And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell to abide therein, and the Wrath and the Curse of Allah are upon him, and a great punishment is prepared for him.<sup>35</sup>

The Beslan outrage was a decidedly wicked crime as it was simultaneously mass murder, a targeting of the innocent, a misplacement of responsibility...

<sup>34</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Baqara [2]:74.

<sup>35</sup> The Quran, Sura an-Nisā' [4]:93.

وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

**No person earns any (sin) except against himself. And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another.**<sup>36</sup>

...a debasing of the institute of jihad, a blight upon the already damaged image of Islam and a propaganda gift for its enemies.

Granted, the child victims of Beslan account for but a fraction of the many thousands of Chechen children killed during the recent Russo-Chechen wars, and it may well be the case that those who perpetrated the Beslan siege were brutalised relatives of some of those slaughtered children as well as being, as late Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov described them, “*Madmen driven out of their senses by Russian acts of brutality.*”<sup>37</sup> But, regardless, the act was and remains an intolerable cruelty against innocents and an abomination against Islam.

Abu Hurayra رضي الله عنه reported a stark threat from the Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم:

Whoever rebels against my *umma*, indiscriminately killing the righteous and wicked of them, not even sparing the devout believers amongst them, and not fulfilling the obligation towards those given a pledge (of peace and security) – then he is not from me and I am not from him.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> The Quran, Sura al-An‘ām [6]:164.

<sup>37</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/459302.stm> [accessed: September 1, 2007]

<sup>38</sup> Recorded in *Sahih Muslim*, *hadith* no. 1848.

## The Prohibition of Treachery – Even Against Enemy Combatants

In addition to the killing of non-combatants, another aspect of warfare that Islamic military jurisprudence patently outlaws is attacking enemy combatants through treachery and betrayal.

Treachery is, by definition, *harām*. In fact, treachery is considered one of the signs of hypocrisy. The Messenger of God, the Prophet ﷺ Muhammad, said:

Whoever has the following four (characteristics) will be a pure hypocrite and whoever has one of the following four characteristics will have one characteristic of hypocrisy unless and until he gives it up: **whenever he is entrusted, he betrays; whenever he speaks, he tells a lie; whenever he makes a covenant, he proves treacherous; whenever he quarrels, he behaves in a very imprudent, evil and insulting manner.**<sup>39</sup>

This is why God mentions truthfulness as being the opposite of hypocrisy:

لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ الصَّادِقِينَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ إِنْ شَاءَ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ

**That Allah may reward the truthful for their truth, and punish the hypocrites if He wills, or turn mercifully towards them**<sup>40</sup>

And this is why the hypocrites, those whose treachery is such that even the Most Merciful Allah's mercy is beyond them, are destined for the worst of abodes.

Allah ﷻ states in His Book:

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا

**Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire; no helper will you find for them.**<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* (1/33).

<sup>40</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Ahzāb [33]:24.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ expressly forbade treachery as a tactic of war. For example, he ﷺ commanded the Muslim army:

...do not embezzle the spoils (of war), **do not commit treachery**, do not mutilate (dead) bodies and do not kill children.<sup>42</sup>

The great jurist, Muhammad ash-Shaybāni, who was himself a student of the great eponym of the Hanafi *madhhab*, Imam Abu Hanīfa, said:

If it happens that a company of Muslims (are allowed to) pass (in peace) through the enemy's front lines... they are not allowed to engage in any hostilities with the enemy troops. Neither are they entitled to seize any of their money or properties as long as they are in their area of authority.

A Muslim exists in a non-Muslim society such as the U.S. or the U.K. only after having been granted or inheriting either the right of permanent domicile through citizenship, the right to remain definitely or indefinitely, or the right of safe passage. These rights are evidenced through the individual's possession or eligibility for a passport, green card, visa and other such official documentation.

Implicit through the granting of these rights by the non-Muslim authority is its reciprocal right not be betrayed by those within its state borders, but that rather the citizen or visitor will abide by the law of the land and co-exist peacefully along with the rest of the population – to say nothing of Islam's obligating its adherents with good manners, pious conduct and noble character; so as to faithfully represent the true religion of God before all His servants and to truly honour the *Sunna* of His Prophet ﷺ by inviting to Islam through righteous example.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The Quran, Sura an-Nisā' [4]:145.

<sup>42</sup> *Sahih Muslim* (19/4294).

<sup>43</sup>

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

**Indeed in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example to follow for whoever hopes in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much.** –Sura [33] al-Ahzāb, *āyah* 21



Allah ﷻ revealed in His Book:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنَّنِي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

**And who is better in speech than he who invites to (the religion of) Allah and does righteous deeds, and says: I am of the Muslims.**<sup>44</sup>

Thus, there exists between the non-Muslim states of the West and the Muslims to be found therein a “covenant of peace and security,” known in the sharia as: *‘aqd ul-amān*. The tolerance and granting of basic civil rights by the non-Muslim state to its Muslim residents and visitors is interpreted by Islam’s jurists as a proof of that state’s abiding by the *‘aqd ul-amān* even though the non-Muslim authorities may be oblivious to the precise sharia terminology or the religious implications for the affected Muslim parties.

Regarding covenants, Allah ﷻ says in the Quran:

وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا

**And fulfill (every) covenant. Indeed, the covenant (you make) is ever (that about which you will be) questioned.**<sup>45</sup>

And He ﷻ also said:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ... وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ... أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

**Successful indeed are the believers... those who are faithfully true to their responsibilities and trusts and to their covenants... These are indeed the inheritors who have inherited Paradise. They shall dwell therein forever.**<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Fussilat [41]:33.

<sup>45</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Isrā’ [17]:34.

<sup>46</sup> The Quran Sura al-Mu’minūn [23]:1, 8, 10-1.

Shaykh Muhammad Sālih bin Uthaymīn told a gathering of Muslims in the U.K.:

I invite you to have respect for those people who have the right that they be respected, from those between you and whom there is and covenant (of peace and security). For the land in which you are living (i.e. the U.K.) is such that there is an (implicit) covenant between you (Muslims) and them (i.e. the non-Muslim U.K. government). If this were not the case they would have killed you or expelled you. So preserve this covenant and do not prove treacherous to it, since treachery is a sign of the hypocrites, and it is not from the way of the believers.<sup>47</sup>

And Allah ﷻ ordered in His Book:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

**O you who believe! Fear Allah and be among the truthful.**<sup>48</sup>

The suicide bombings of 9/11 and 7/7, the several foiled trans-Atlantic bomb plots since and the near-suicidal shooting spree at Fort Hood on November 5, 2009, were all acts of treachery. In fact, terrorism and all forms of political violence carried out by Muslims residing temporarily or permanently in the West are to be considered acts of treachery. That is because the perpetrators do not commit or claim these atrocities except that they are in breach of their covenants. Another Hanafi jurist, Ibn al-Hammān, defined treachery precisely this way:

Treachery is the betrayal and breaking of a covenant.<sup>49</sup>

Earlier, it was mentioned how the efficacy of suicide bombing rests upon the element of surprise and penetration; that is, launching a surprise attack upon the enemy after having first penetrated their ranks. Also mentioned earlier was the *fiqh* principle which states that whatever act is built upon falsehood is itself falsehood.

<sup>47</sup> Shaykh Muhammad bin Sālih bin Uthaymīn, in a telelink to Birmingham, UK, on July 28, 2000.

<sup>48</sup> The Quran, Sura at-Tawba [9]:119.

<sup>49</sup> Ibn Al-Hammām in *Fath-ul-Qadir* (12/408).

It follows then that if an enemy conglomeration is penetrated via the sinful means of treachery, any subsequent attack upon their unsuspecting forces is similarly sinful and falsehood. Whether such an attack is suicidal or purely homicidal in nature becomes a mute point.

But because jihadists have invested so much into the tactic of suicide bombing, which they laud as most effective weapon in the arsenal of the so-called *mujāhidīn*, and because that weapon is only really effective when employed against an unsuspecting enemy, jihadists will rationalise the treachery that is necessary for penetrating those enemy defences that would otherwise render a human bomb ineffective. This rationalisation the jihadist clerics make via a misrepresentation of the well-known *hadīth* of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, when he ﷺ said:

War is deception! ( الْحَرْبُ خُدْعَةٌ )<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, the essentiality of deception in war, from the strategic use of misinformation to the tactic of camouflage and concealment, has been affirmed to a greater or lesser extent throughout history, including in non-Muslim classics from Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* to Carl von Clausewitz's *On War*.

However, Islam places an important caveat to deceit in war which totally precludes all the justifications for Western or West-based Muslims from surreptitiously attacking “their” armed forces. To quote the great scholar, Imam Nawawi, in his explanation of the aforementioned *hadīth*:

The scholars have agreed that it is permissible to deceive the disbelievers during times of war regardless of how it is achieved – **as long as it does not lead to breaking any covenant or treaty**, for that is unacceptable.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Sabīh Muslim*, *hadīth* no. 3273.

<sup>51</sup> Imam an-Nawawi in his *Sharh Sabīh Muslim*, commentary on *hadīth* no. 3273.

Hence, jihadists and *takfiris* resort to emotional arguments in justifying the treachery of suicide bombing. “The *kuffār* have betrayed us, so we can betray them... British and American soldiers are killing Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan, so we can kill them in the U.S. and U.K... The *kuffār* have proved treacherous with the Muslims in Palestine and Somalia (through their support for the Israeli and Ethiopian aggressors respectively), so their blood is lawful for us... They, not us, first broke the covenant when they invaded and occupied our lands and bombed our towns and cities...” And so goes the narrative.

But, none of the above grievances, as well-founded as they are, can be allowed to inform a Muslim’s responses without his or her firstly and finally tempering their emotions with the pristine texts of the religion. And the texts of Islam direct their reader to two important points:

1) An individual’s covenant is *fard ‘ayn* – individually binding. Therefore, individual Muslims in non-Muslim states are required to fulfill their obligations as citizens or visitors vis-à-vis their particular relationship with their non-Muslim authority regardless of what occurs between it and other parties of Muslims. This point is established through the following *āyah*:

وَإِنْ اسْتَنْصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُم مِّيثَاقٌ

**But if they (the believers) seek your help in religion, it is your duty to help them except against a people between whom you have a treaty<sup>52</sup>**

2) If some Muslims decide to rescind their covenant for whatever conscientious objection, then they are to explicitly inform the other party.

This second point is also clearly outlined in the speech of Allah ﷻ:

وَأَمَّا تَخَافَنَّ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً فَانْبِذْ إِلَيْهِمْ عَلَىٰ سَوَاءٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَائِنِينَ

<sup>52</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Anfāl [8]:72.

**If you fear treachery from any people, throw back (their covenant) to them (so as to be) on equal terms (that there will be no more covenant between you and them). Certainly Allah likes not the treacherous.**<sup>53</sup>

The great scholar of Cordova, from the illustrious Islamic era in Spain, Imam al-Qurtubi, commented on the above *āyah*, saying:

It is not permissible to attack them (the enemy) until they know with insight what their affair is (in terms of a return to hostilities) and they are warned (that war may befall them). This was the origin for everything that the people of infidelity felt was a covenant and a trust from the Muslims.<sup>54</sup>

In other words, if a Western (or West-residing) Muslim is sincerely and intellectually convinced that his country has made any further pursuance of peaceful co-existence untellable, then he is to unequivocally reject the *'aqd ul-amān* before the offending authorities. And what this translates to practically is renouncing one's citizenship or requesting an annulment of one's visa – depending upon whether the person is a residing or visiting.

The Quranic guidance here does not allow for the rejection of one's covenant in some spectacular fashion or a blaze of glory, such as by taking up arms against one's friends and colleagues, as did Maj. Nidal Hasan at Fort Hood, or by attempting to blow up an airplane, as did Richard Reid the shoe-bomber, or by inciting violence against home-coming British troops, as did the charlatan shaykh, Anjem Choudary in Luton.

As a matter of fact, never did any West-based suicide bomber **“throw back”** his covenant at his enemy as Allah ordered. In each and every case, he betrayed his covenant, pretending to abide by it while seeking to mass murder those whom he mislead to believe had no reason to fear from him any treachery or mischief.

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<sup>53</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Anfāl [8]:58.

<sup>54</sup> *Kitāb ul-Injād fī Abwāb il-Jihād* (2/310).

Little wonder then that every single plot that was designed to harm those who may or may not be considered enemies of Islam, and that was accompanied by the treacherous reneging of a covenant, has resulted in nothing but increased misery for the Muslims and the most shameful of aspersions upon the Islamic ethos.

Indeed, He ﷻ, the Most High, inspired His prophet, Yūsuf<sup>55</sup> ﷺ, to say:

وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي كَيْدَ الْخَائِنِينَ

**And, verily! Allah guides not the plot of those who betray.**<sup>56</sup>

Just as He ﷻ also warned in His Book:

وَالَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ  
وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ

**And those who break the Covenant of Allah, after its ratification, and sever that which Allah has commanded to be joined, and work mischief in the land, on them is the curse (of distance from Allah's Mercy); and for them is the unhappy home (in Hell).**<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> That is, the prophet of God, Joseph.

<sup>56</sup> The Quran, Sura Yūsuf [12]:52.

<sup>57</sup> The Quran, Sura ar-Ra'ad [13]:25.

## Evidences Advanced in Defence of Suicide Bombing

### Verses of the Holy Quran

Allah ﷻ says in His Book:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ  
اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ

Verily, Allah has purchased from the believers their selves and their wealth, in return for Paradise being theirs. They fight in the path of Allah, they kill and are killed.<sup>58</sup>

That is: **“They kill (the enemy) and are killed (by the enemy).”** In order for this verse to justify suicide bombing, as the jihadi erroneously argues, it would have to mean: **“They kill (the enemy) and are killed (by themselves).”**

Similarly, Allah ﷻ says in the Quran:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أحيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ

And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive with their Lord, and they have provision.<sup>59</sup>

Shaykh Sālih bin Fawzān al-Fawzān explains this verse, saying:

And He did not say **“who killed themselves”** (but He did say: **“who have been killed [i.e. by others]”**). The one who is killed (by others) in the cause of Allah is rewarded, and the one who kills himself is sinful, so make a distinction between the two. And nobody makes them equal except someone who has been confused or someone who is ignorant.

<sup>58</sup> The Quran, Sura at-Tawba [9]:111.

<sup>59</sup> The Quran, Sura Āl ‘Imrān [3]:169.

Another *āyah* the advocates of suicide bombing rely on, is His ﷺ speech:

كَمْ مِنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

**How often a small group overcame a mighty host by Allah's Leave?  
And Allah is with the patient.**<sup>60</sup>

Al-Ayiri comments in his essay, *The Islamic Ruling...*:

This verse indicates that the measure of power in the sharia is not primarily linked to material, worldly measures.

But what other measure is given for justifying suicide bombing if not a material, worldly measure? They quote this *āyah* arguing that the suicide bomber is able to overcome the material odds against him by virtue of another material, worldly power: a single exploding human bomb killing many times his own number. Whereas the message of the *āyah* is that Allah ﷻ, from above the seven heavens, is the One who allows the outnumbered believers to overcome their numerically superior enemy. In other words, victory is granted to a smaller force through His divine intervention, not through a chemical explosion. Numerous other *āyāt* establish this divine dynamic.

For example, Allah ﷻ says in His Book:

بَلَىٰ إِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَيَأْتُوكُم مِّن فَوْرِهِمْ هَذَا يُمْدِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ آلَافٍ  
مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِينَ

**Yes, if you hold on to patience and piety, and the enemy comes rushing at you; your Lord will help you with five thousand angels having marks (of distinction).**<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Baqara [2]:249.

<sup>61</sup> The Quran, Sura Āl 'Imrān [3]:125.



During the great Battle of Badr in which the Muslim army was customarily outnumbered, the Prophet ﷺ threw some sand in the direction of the enemy formations who were assembled a significant distance away. Miraculously, the sand travelled all the way across the plain of battle and violently struck the faces of the pagan chieftains of Mecca. This was but one of many miracles that Allah ﷻ granted His Prophet at Badr, including the slaughter of the much larger and better armed foe. Allah ﷻ said of His Heavenly assistance on the Day of Badr:

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَى

**You killed them not, but Allah killed them. And you (Muhammad) threw not when you threw (the sand) but (it was) Allah who threw<sup>62</sup>**

It is as if the proponents of suicide bombing want Muslims to suffice themselves with the explosive power hidden within suicide vests instead of the eternal power that is gifted on account of the faith that is hidden within their chests!

Another favourite proof for the suicide bombing proponents is His ﷺ saying:

وَمَنْ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَؤُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

**And of mankind is he who would sell himself, seeking the Pleasure of Allah. And Allah is full of Kindness to (His) slaves.<sup>63</sup>**

In relation to this verse, Mudrak bin ‘Awf رضي الله عنه narrates the following incident:

I was with ‘Umar when he received a messenger [from a battle]. ‘Umar asked him about the condition of the soldiers. The messenger kept on mentioning to ‘Umar some of the well-known people who died and then he said: *“And others died whom I don't know.”* ‘Umar said: *“But Allah knows them!”* The messenger said: *“And men who sold themselves to Allah.”*

<sup>62</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Anfāl [8]:17.

<sup>63</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Baqara [2]:207.

Mudrak said: *“Among those is my uncle. People claim he killed himself by throwing himself into the enemy’s army.”* ‘Umar said: *“Whoever claims that is a liar. He (your uncle, O Mudrak) is one of those who sold this world for the next.”*<sup>64</sup>

Anwar al-Awlaki, the radical U.S.-Yemeni preacher, quoted this narration, saying:

So here you have a man who jumps into the army, seeking martyrdom. Might as well just put on an explosive belt. What’s the difference?! Jump in with an army of thousands?! So [pause] its definite death (either way).<sup>65</sup>

Well, the difference is that jumping into an army of thousands in an act of *iqtibām* is legislated while putting on and detonating an explosive belt is not.

The difference is that jumping into an army of thousands is not definite death<sup>66</sup> while putting on and detonating an explosive belt definitely is.

The difference is the one who jumps into an army of thousands and dies, achieves martyrdom because he died by other than his own hand. While the suicide bomber does not achieve martyrdom precisely because he does die by his own hand.

The difference is that ‘Umar رضي الله عنه considered whosoever accused the one who jumped into the enemy of having killed himself to be liars. While the one claiming martyrdom for whosoever detonates his explosive belt is the liar.

And the difference is that the one who jumped into the army of thousands, like Mudrak’s uncle and those who were martyred alongside him, aided Islam against their enemies. While the suicide bomber ultimately aids the enemies of Islam.

So, no, it is not definite death either way. And no, it is not martyrdom either way.

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<sup>64</sup> Recorded by Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Mundhir.

<sup>65</sup> Anwar al-Awlaki, *The Book of Jihad: Is it Suicide or Martyrdom?* (2:18) [http://liveleak.com/view?i=b3f\\_1257095687](http://liveleak.com/view?i=b3f_1257095687) [accessed: November 10, 2009]

<sup>66</sup> As is evidenced in the case of Al-Barā’ bin Mālīk at the Battle of Yamāma, below.

## Narrations of the Prophet ﷺ on the virtues of martyrdom

From the many *abādīth* of the Prophet ﷺ praising martyrdom is his saying:

By (Allah) in Whose Hand is my soul! I have surely wished to be killed in the path of Allah, then brought to life, then killed [again], then brought to life, then killed!<sup>67</sup>

And he ﷺ, who was the answered prayer of the Prophet Abraham عليه السلام, also said:

Our Sustainer (Allah) marvels at two men: a man who stirs from his bed to pray and a man who fights in Allah's Cause, his companions are defeated and he realizes what awaits him in defeat and what awaits him in returning [to combat], but he returns [to combat nevertheless] until his blood is spilled. Allah says: *"Look at My servant who went back [to combat] hopeful and anxious for what is with Me, until his blood was spilled."*<sup>68</sup>

And he ﷺ, who was the fulfillment of the Gospel of Jesus عليه السلام, also said:

Among the best of lives for people is a man who clasps the reins of his horse in the path of Allah, rushing on its back; whenever he hears a cry [of battle] or advancement towards the enemy, he hurries to it, seeking death and being slain with eagerness.<sup>69</sup>

وَلَئِنْ قُتِلْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ مُتُّمْ لَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ

**And if you are killed or die in the path of Allah, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are far better than all that they (the hypocrites) amass (in this world).**<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> *Sahīh al-Bukhārī, Sahīh Muslim* and others.

<sup>68</sup> Narrated by Ibn Mas'ūd عليه السلام in *Musnad Ahmad* (6/22).

<sup>69</sup> Narrated from Abu Hurayra عليه السلام in *Sahīh Muslim*.

<sup>70</sup> The Qurān, Sura Āl 'Imrān [3]:156.

## Narrations extolling the martyrdom of the Companions رضي الله عنهم

From the many *āthār* of the Companions رضي الله عنهم of Allah's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم extolling their jihad on the battlefield are...

Mu'ādh ibn 'Afra رضي الله عنه asked Allah's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم: "*What makes Allah laugh (with approval) at His slave?*" He صلى الله عليه وسلم replied: "*His (the slave's) immersing himself into the enemy without armour.*" Mu'ādh رضي الله عنه then took off his armour and fought until he was killed.<sup>71</sup>

Thābit ibn Qays رضي الله عنه, the standard bearer of the Ansār during the Battle of Yamāma, dug a pit and planted himself in it. He fought until he was killed and the pit had become his own grave.

Salim رضي الله عنه, the freed slave of Abu Hudhayfa رضي الله عنه, was the standard bearer of the Muhājirūn during the Battle of Yamāma. Demonstrating valour for his people, Salim proclaimed: "*If you manage to overtake me, what a miserable bearer of the Quran I shall be.*" He then plunged into the enemy ranks and fought until he too attained martyrdom.

In the same battle, Zayd ibn al-Khattāb رضي الله عنه, brother of 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb رضي الله عنه, called out to the Muslims: "*Men, bite with your teeth, strike the enemy, and press on. By Allah, I shall not speak to you after this until either Musaylama<sup>72</sup> is defeated or I meet Allah.*" Zayd then charged the enemy and continued fighting until he was killed.

In the Battle of Mu'ta, J'afar ibn Abi Tālib took the standard and fought until he became immersed in the fighting, whereupon he turned to his light-colored horse and wounded it (so he could not escape), then he fought until he was killed.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Ibn Abi Shayba in his *Al-Musannaf* (5/338).

<sup>72</sup> Musaylama al-Kadhhdhāb (i.e. the Great liar, Imposter) who claimed prophethood after the death of Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم.

<sup>73</sup> Narrated by Ibn Jarīr at-Tabari in his *Tarikh* (2/151).

## Analysis

As high explosives were not known during the early centuries of Islam, all the arguments advanced to justify suicide bombing through reference to the *Sunna* of Allah's Messenger ﷺ and the practice of his Companions ﷺ are by way of rather tenuous analogy.

What should be immediately apparent from the above *abādīth* of the Prophet ﷺ and *āthār* of his Companions ﷺ is that they all clearly extol the virtue of the *mujāhid* fighting the enemy until he is killed by them. Pay attention here: the narrations are praising the one who fights until he is killed by his enemy – not the one who kills himself in order to fight the enemy. Hence, the speech of Allah ﷻ:

يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ

**They fight in the path of Allah, they kill and are killed.**<sup>74</sup>

Thus, the battlefield martyr, according to the divinely-revealed texts and consensus of the jurists, is the one who fights and then dies by *other* than his own hand.<sup>75</sup> As for the lone warrior charging the enemy ranks during jihad, he never sets out to kill himself – unlike the suicide bomber. And in the likely though never certain event that this *mujāhid* falls in battle, then he has attained martyrdom. So, the result is usually either victory for this life or martyrdom for the next: a win-win situation for any true believer. There is no parable to this with suicide bombing.

وَمَنْ يُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيُقْتَلْ أَوْ يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

**And whosoever fights in the Cause of Allah and is killed or attains victory, We shall bestow on him a great reward.**<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> The Quran, Sura at-Tawba [9]:111.

<sup>75</sup> The only exception to this is the case of the one who kills himself accidentally. Such a person may still be considered a martyr if his intention was not to die by his own hand, but to continue to fight until the enemy kills him.

<sup>76</sup> The Quran, Sura an-Nisā' [4]:74.

## Al-Barā' رضي الله عنه at the Battle of Yamāma

The Battle of Yamāma was arguably the most savage and fierce that the Muslims had fought up until that point. The army of the true prophet, Muhammad ﷺ, who had recently left this world, met the army of the false prophet, Musaylama al-Kadhdhāb, on the territory of Banu Hanīfa at Yamāma in Najd, central Arabia.

In what was becoming all-or-nothing battle for the survival of Islam itself, Musaylama and his men were devastating the Muslim forces, forcing the latter's retreat from their positions and even storming the tent of their commander, the brilliant Khālid ibn Walīd رضي الله عنه. Khālid رضي الله عنه reorganised his army along tribal lines so that every causality would be known and recognised by his comrades, spurring them to even greater deeds of valour. The tactic had the desired affect. Mention of the brave martyrdom of Thābit ibn Qays رضي الله عنه, Zayd ibn al-Khattāb رضي الله عنه, and Salim رضي الله عنه during this battle has already proceeded.

Then came the heroism of Al-Barā' bin Mālik al-Ansāri رضي الله عنه.<sup>77</sup> As the battle raged with ever greater intensity, Khālid رضي الله عنه ordered Al-Barā': "*Charge, O young man of the Ansār!*" Al-Barā' رضي الله عنه turned to his men, saying: "*O Ansār, let not anyone of you think of returning to Medina. There is no Medina for you after this day. There is only Allah, then Paradise.*" He and the Ansār رضي الله عنهم then rushed the lines of the disbelievers, breaking both their ranks and their spirits, and forcing them to withdraw. Musaylama and his still thousands-strong forces barricaded themselves behind a high-walled fruit garden, which later became known as *The Garden of Death*. From this fortified position, the army of the false prophet began raining down arrows on the Muslims and ripping apart their flesh with iron barbs on chains. Al-Barā' رضي الله عنه said to his fellow soldiers:

I shall squat upon a shield and you shall raise the shield with the help of your spears to the height of the outer-wall of the garden. Then you shall propel me inside. Either I will die a martyr or I will open the gate for you.

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<sup>77</sup> Some of these details recalling the exploits of Al-Barā' at Yamāma have reached us via an inauthentic chain of transmission. It is for the sake of argument that the story is cited here as fact.

Thus, Al-Barā' رضي الله عنه descended upon the enemy hoards. He slay many of their number and sustained many blows and injuries before eventually managing to open the gate. The Muslims charged through the open gate, and fought bitterly at close quarters until Musaylama was finally killed and victory was finally attained.<sup>78</sup>

As for Al-Barā' رضي الله عنه, he was carried to Medina where he spent a month in the care of Khālid ibn al-Walīd رضي الله عنه, who personally tended to his eighty or so wounds.<sup>79</sup>

## Analysis

The exploits of Al-Barā' رضي الله عنه at Yamāma are a favourite proof among radical Muslims for martyrdom operations. Al-Qaeda in Iraq even have a suicide bombing squad named in honour of this fearless Companion: the *Al-Barā' bin Mālik Battalion* or the *Al-Barā' bin Mālik Martyrdom Brigade*.<sup>80</sup>

Perhaps another reason why Al-Barā' at Yamāma is so celebrated by *takfiris* is because the battle was fought against tribes who had apostatised from Islam. *Takfiris* often console themselves with their murderous antics, from Casablanca to Kabul and from to Riyadh to Rawalpindi, by declaring their victims to be apostates; either because they do not implement the sharia (according to a particular interpretation) or because they refuse to support their own jihadi ranks.

Al-Barā' رضي الله عنه took a calculated risk when he plunged perilously behind enemy lines. His explicitly-stated aim was to breach the enemy defences in what was a clear act of *iqtibām*. The risk paid off. Al-Barā' رضي الله عنه opened the gate and the Muslims stormed through to victory. Al-Barā' رضي الله عنه neither intended his own death and nor did his actions necessitate it – unlike the case of the suicide bomber. Moreover, Al-Barā' رضي الله عنه actually survived the Battle of Yamāma and died a martyr's death years later in Tastar, Persia.

<sup>78</sup> Reported by Ibn Ishāk from Ibn Hajar's *Al-Isāba*.

<sup>79</sup> Imam Bayhaqi.

<sup>80</sup> Mohammed M. Hafez, *Suicide bombers in Iraq: the strategy and ideology of martyrdom*, United States.

Furthermore, Al-Barā' launched himself against a dense grouping of the enemy in a blatant and overt act of jihad. He did not covertly mingle amongst a crowd of non-Muslims, as if a part of them, in order to attack them treacherously. He did not, as many suicide bombers do, don a woman's burqa or the locks and paraphernalia of an orthodox Jew, and nor did he trade his beard and armour for a clean-shaven face and a pair of tight-fitting jeans; Al-Barā' رضي الله عنه did not pretend to be irreligious and unIslamic, an impious Muslim or an indifferent non-Muslim. He wore his Islam on his sleeve, so-to-speak, in a manifest act of jihad, open war and declared hostility between the followers of Islam and the followers of falsehood. Thus, Al-Barā' was in no way the blueprint of a suicide bomber رضي الله عنه.

Allah سبحانه وتعالى revealed:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ

**And fight in Allah's Cause those who fight you, but do not transgress the limits (of the sharia). Truly, Allah loves not the transgressors.**<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Baqara [2]:190.



## Talha and others رضي الله عنهم at the Battle of Uhud

During the Battle of Uhud, there occurred the most awkward and dangerous hour for the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as he had found himself left behind his own ranks. The pagan army – smarting, no doubt, from their earlier humiliating defeat at the Battle of Badr – closed in on and encircled the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and were looking forward to killing him.

The pagan warrior, ‘Utba bin Abi Waqqās, pelted the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with stones, breaking his lower right incisor and wounding his lower lip. The head of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was cleaved by another pagan warrior, ‘Abdullah bin Shihāb az-Zuhri. Yet another obstinate pagan, the powerful horseman, ‘Abdullah bin Qami‘a, struck the Prophet’s shoulder with his sword so violently that the he صلى الله عليه وسلم felt its pain for over a month. The Meccan knight also dealt a heavy blow on the Prophet’s cheek, saying *“Take this stroke from me, I am Ibn Qami‘a,”* while causing two iron rings from the Prophet’s helmet to penetrate into his holy cheek.

Wiping away the blood flowing on his face, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

(I wonder) how can people who cut the face of their Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and break his incisor – he who (merely) calls them to worship Allah – how can such people thrive or be successful?!

Whereupon Allah عز وجل revealed the verse:

لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَوْ يُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

**Not for you (O Muhammad) is the decision: whether He turns in mercy to (pardon) them or punishes them. Verily, they are the wrong-doers.**<sup>82 83</sup>

<sup>82</sup> The Quran, Sura Āl ‘Imrān [3]:128.

<sup>83</sup> *Sahīh al-Bukhārī* (2/582).

It seemed for a long while that all that stood between the Meccan forces and the noble Messenger of God ﷺ were two brave Companions: Talha bin ‘Ubaydullah رضي الله عنه and Sa‘ad bin Abi Waqqās رضي الله عنه.<sup>84</sup> These two men fought so fiercely and valiantly in defence of their beloved Prophet ﷺ that they succeeded in saving his life until reinforcements arrived.

Talha رضي الله عنه fought till his fingers were cut off, causing him to say: “*Be they cut off!*” To which the Prophet ﷺ responded: “*Had you said: ‘In the Name of Allah,’ the angels would have raised you up before the people’s very eyes.*”<sup>85</sup> In total, Talha رضي الله عنه sustained at least thirty-five wounds, including the paralysis of his forefinger and index finger<sup>86</sup> and some ten sword-strokes to his body.<sup>87</sup>

The Prophet ﷺ said about Talha رضي الله عنه:

He who desires to see a martyr walking on the earth, let him look at Talha bin ‘Ubaydullah.<sup>88</sup>

Eventually, when other Companions realised the precarious position of the Prophet ﷺ, they rushed to his defence. The brave hero, Abu Dujāna رضي الله عنه, used his back to shield the Prophet ﷺ from enemy arrows.

Others, like Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه and Abu ‘Ubayda bin al-Jarrāh رضي الله عنه, tended to the Prophet’s wounds. Careful not to hurt the Prophet ﷺ, Abu ‘Ubayda رضي الله عنه bit onto one of the two iron rings lodged in the Prophet’s cheek and began to pull it out. Consequently, Abu ‘Ubayda’s own front tooth fell out رضي الله عنه.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari* (1/527) and (2/581).

<sup>85</sup> Narrated by Jabir رضي الله عنه in *Fath-al-Bari* (7/361); *an-Nasa’i* (2/52-3).

<sup>86</sup> Hākim in *Al-Iklil* (7/361) and *Sahih al-Bukhari* (1/527) and (2/581).

<sup>87</sup> *Za‘ad al-Ma‘ad* (2/95).

<sup>88</sup> At-Tirmidhi in *Mishkāt* (2/566); Ibn Hishām (2/86).

<sup>89</sup> Narrated by Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه in *Sahih ibn Hibban*.

## Analysis

From the Battle of Uhud, we learn of brave and selfless warriors who placed themselves in harms way as if they were human shields – an act known amongst the jurists of Islam as *tatarrus* – risking their lives in order to *save* the lives of others. The suicide bomber, however, puts himself in harms way in order to *take* the lives of others. There is no comparison to be drawn between saving lives and taking lives.

The actions of the Companions at Uhud ﷺ, as recalled above, illustrate and exemplify the virtue of altruism; a virtue which does not necessitate the death of its actor, unlike the case of the suicide bomber.

The protective measures of Talha and other Companions were undertaken only in order that their friend, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, may live and, if necessary, but not necessarily, fight on. This was the intention of Talha, Sa‘ad, Abu Dujāna and Abu ‘Ubayda – as is plainly manifest through their deeds. Besides, none of these named defenders of the Prophet ﷺ died in the battle of Uhud. Talha ﷺ was himself martyred much later, during the *khilāfa* of ‘Ali bin Abi Tālib ﷺ.

## The Story of the People of the Ditch

By their own admission, the strongest evidence the *takfiri*-jihadis present for the justification of suicide bombing is the *hadith* about the boy and the king from the story of the People of the Ditch. The story, which is recalled in the *tafsir* of *Sura al-Buruj*, recounts the steadfastness of some pre-Islamic followers of the Messiah and Prophet of God, Jesus the son of Mary عليه السلام, before the tyranny of the Jewish king, Dhu Nuwās. Suhayb رضي الله عنه related from Allah's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم:

There lived a king before you and he had a (court) magician. As he (the magician) grew old, he said to the king: *"I have grown old. Send some young boy to me so that I should teach him magic."* The king sent to him a young man so that he should train him (in magic). And on his way to the magician, the youth found a monk sitting there. The youth listened to the monk's talk and was impressed by it. It became his habit that on his way to the magician he met the monk and set there and he came to the magician (late). The magician beat him because of delay. He made a complaint of that to the monk and he said to him: *"When you feel afraid of the magician, say: 'Members of my family had detained me.' And when you feel afraid of your family you should say: 'The magician had detained me.'"* It so happened that there came a huge beast (of prey) and it blocked the way of the people, and he (the young boy) said: *"I will come to know today whether the magician is superior or the monk is superior."* He picked up a stone and said: *"O Allah, if the affair of the monk is dearer to Thee than the affair of the magician, cause death to this animal, so that the people should be able to move about freely."* He threw that stone towards it and killed it and the people began to move about (on the path freely). He (the young man) then came to that monk and informed him and the monk said: *"Son, today you are superior to me. Your affair has come to a stage where I find that you would be soon put to a trial, and in case you are put to a trial, do not give my clue."* The youth began to treat the blind and those suffering from leprosy and he in fact began to cure people from (all kinds) of illness.

When a companion of the king who had gone blind heard about him, he came to him with numerous gifts and said: *“If you cure me all these things collected together here would be yours.”* The youth said: *“I myself do not cure anyone. It is Allah Who cures and if you affirm faith in Allah, I shall also supplicate Allah to cure you.”*

The king’s companion affirmed his faith in Allah and Allah cured him. He came to the king and sat by his side as he used to sit before. The king said to him: *“Who restored your eyesight?”* He said: *“My Lord.”* Whereupon the king said: *“It means that your Lord is One besides me?”* He said: *“My Lord and your Lord is Allah.”* So the king took hold of him and tormented him till he gave a clue of that boy. The young man was thus summoned and the king said to him: *“O boy, it has been conveyed to me that you have become so much proficient in your magic that you cure the blind and those suffering from leprosy and you do such and such things.”* Whereupon the boy said: *“I do not cure anyone; it is Allah Who cures.”* The king took hold of him and began to torment him until he gave a clue of the monk. The monk was thus summoned and it was said to him: *“You should turn back from your religion.”* He, however, refused to do so. The king then ordered for a saw to be brought, placed it in the middle of the monk’s head and sawed it into parts till they fell down. Then the courtier of the king was brought and it was said to him: *“Turn back from your religion.”* He refused to do so, and the saw was placed in the midst of his head and it was parted till it fell down. Then, the young boy was brought and it was said to him: *“Turn back from your religion.”* He refused to do so and he was handed over to a group of his courtiers and it was said to them: *“Take him to such and such mountain; make him climb up that mountain and when you reach its top (ask him to renounce his faith) but if he refuses to do so, then throw him (down the mountain).”* So they took him and made him climb up the mountain and he said: *“O Allah, save me from them (in any way) You wish,”* and the mountain began to quake and they all fell down and that person came walking to the king. The king asked: *“What has happened to your companions?”* He said: *“Allah has saved me from them.”*

The king again handed the boy to his courtiers and said: *“Take him and carry him in a small boat and when you reach the middle of the ocean (ask him to renounce) his religion, but if he does not renounce his religion throw him (into the water).”*

So they took him and he said: *“O Allah, save me from them and what they want to do.”* It was quite soon that the boat turned over and they were drowned and he came walking to the king, and the king said to him: *“What has happened to your companions?”* He said: *“Allah has saved me from them,”* and he said to the king: *“You cannot kill me until you do what I ask you to do.”* And he said: *“What is that?”* He said: *“You should gather people in a plain and hang me by the trunk (of a tree). Then take hold of an arrow from the quiver and say: ‘In the name of Allah, the Lord of the worlds’; then shoot an arrow. If you do that, then you would be able to kill me.”* So the king called the people in an open plain and tied the boy to the trunk of a tree, then he took hold of an arrow from his quiver and then placed the arrow in the bow and then said: *“In the name of Allah, the Lord of the young boy”*; he then shot an arrow and it hit his temple.

The boy placed his hands upon the temple where the arrow had hit him and died. The people said: *“We affirm our faith in the Lord of this young man, we affirm our faith in the Lord of this young man, we affirm our faith in the Lord of this young man.”* The courtiers came to the king and it was said to him: *“Do you see that Allah has actually done what you aimed at averting? They (the people) have affirmed their faith in the Lord.”* The king commanded ditches to be dug at important points in the path. When these ditches were dug, and the fire was lit in them it was said (to the people): *“He who would not turn back from his (boy’s) religion would be thrown in the fire”* or it would be said to them to jump in that ditch. (The people courted death but did not renounce religion) till a woman came with her child and she felt hesitant in jumping into the fire and the child said to her: *“O mother, endure (this ordeal) for it is the Truth.”*<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *Sahih Muslim* (42/7148).

In relation to this story, Allah ﷻ revealed:

قُتِلَ أَصْحَابُ الْأُخْدُودِ النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوُقُودِ إِذْ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا قُعُودٌ وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ مَا  
يَفْعَلُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُهُودٌ وَمَا نَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا أَن يُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ

**Cursed were the people of the ditch. Fire (they) supplied (abundantly) with fuel – when they sat by it and witnessed what they were doing against the believers. They had nothing against them, except that they believed in Allah, the All-Mighty, Worthy of all Praise!**<sup>91</sup>

### Analysis

The heroes in this story were the Christians of old, from the true believers before the coming of Islam. In another place, Allah ﷻ revealed about such believers:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ  
وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

**Verily! Those who believe (as Muslims) and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians: whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and do righteous good deeds shall have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, and nor shall they grieve.**<sup>92</sup>

Through miracles from Allah, the martyrdom of one young believer at the hands of a tyrant caused the onlookers to enter into true faith and also attain martyrdom. Allah inspired the boy with steadfastness in the face of death just as He inspired the baby and the end of the story to speak miraculously and encourage its mother with the same.

<sup>91</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Burūj [85]:4-8.

<sup>92</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Baqara [2]:62. See also Sura al-Mā'ida [5]:69 and Sura al-Hajj [22]:17.

This *hadith* is the same proof Al-Qaeda's chief ideologue, Ayman al-Zawahiri, has publicly used to encourage suicide bombing. The *hadith* was also used by the Saudi *takfiri* cleric, Shaykh Sulaymān bin Nāsir al-Alwān,<sup>93</sup> and the radical preacher, Anwar al-Awlaki, as an evidence for so-called martyrdom operations. Yet, this *hadith* is the flimsiest of supports for such an act, and for the following reasons:

1) The whole episode of the People of the Ditch is inadmissible as an evidence for the rules of jihad because it is from a previous sharia from pre-Islamic times.

At the dawn of history, Allah ﷻ ordered the angels to prostrate before Adam.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ

**And (recall) when We said to the angels: "Prostrate unto Adam."**<sup>94</sup>

That was the state of the true religion – submission to Allah's will – at that time. To prostrate to Adam was to submit to Allah's will. But since then, Allah's religion was perfected and made manifest through His Final Prophet, Muhammad ﷺ:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

**This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.**<sup>95</sup>

Since *that* day, prostration to other than Allah became impermissible.<sup>96</sup> Thus does the sharia of Muhammad ﷺ abrogate all that went before it.

<sup>93</sup> In his treatise entitled, '*Alā inna nasr-Allabi qarib*', published on October 28, 2001.

<sup>94</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Isrā' [17]:61.

<sup>95</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Mā'ida [5]:3.

<sup>96</sup> The Companions said to the Prophet ﷺ, after a camel came and prostrated before him out of reverence and respect: "O Prophet ﷺ, we are more deserving of prostrating to you than the animals." To which the Prophet ﷺ replied: "It is not allowed for anyone. If it were allowed, I would have asked women to prostrate to their husbands." – *Sunnan ad-Dārimi* (1/10) and *Sahib Ibn Hibbān* (4/335)



2) If a person on death row is given a choice: death by firing squad, lethal injection, hanging or the electric chair, and chooses one, do we say he took his own life or that he simply chose his preferred method of execution? This is the case here. The boy did not kill himself by his own hand. He merely chose his preferred method of execution. Either way, the king was committed on killing the boy. So, to outwit the king and have the people believe in Allah, the boy told the king that he could only be killed by an arrow fired in God's holy name.

Ibn Taymiyya said regarding the martyrdom of the believing youth:

...because this was a jihad in Allah's cause, which caused a whole nation to truly believe. And he (the boy) did not really lose anything, since although he died, he would have to die anyway, sooner or later.

3) The certainty with which the boy knew that he would die only by an arrow fired in God's name could not have come to him except through divine inspiration. Such direct inspiration from Allah ended with the death of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Anyone today who claims to know the precise method and moment of his death is claiming to have received inspiration from Allah or to have come to possess knowledge of the unseen by some other means. Either way, the claim is an act of apostasy. Allah ﷻ stated in the Quran:

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ

**And with Him (Allah alone) are the keys to the unseen. None knows them but He.**<sup>97</sup>

4) If the lessons to be learnt from this story are related to jihad, then they are of a very different kind of jihad than those which have been recounted in the classical Islamic texts. Not only did the martyrs in the story not kill themselves, but they never once tried to fight back, harm or kill their enemy. The story, therefore, serves as more of a lesson for the *jihad of the self* than it does the *jihad of the sword*.

<sup>97</sup> The Quran, Sura al-An'am [6]:59.

5) The martyrdom of the righteous boy lead to an immediate and everlasting benefit as the people looking on embraced Islam. Suicide bombings cannot boast anything even remotely approaching such a desirable outcome. Quite the contrary. Suicide attacks almost always result in brutal reprisals and collective punishments for the wider civilian populous alongside an exponential increase in Islamophobic sentiment; all of which contravenes the Islamic principle: *fighting evil itself becomes evil if, as a consequence, it leads to more harm.*

Shaykh Ibn Uthaymīn continues in his *fatwa*:

So if he (the suicide bomber) kills himself along with ten or a hundred or two hundred other people, then Islam will not benefit by that, since the people will not accept Islam, contrary to the story of the boy. Rather, it will likely make the enemy more determined, and this action will provoke (even greater) malice and bitterness in his heart to an extent that he may seek to destroy the Muslims even more, as is what is found from the practice of the (Israeli) Jews with the people of Palestine. So when one of the Palestinians dies by such (suicide) bombings and kills six or seven people, they (the Israelis) take sixty or more people in retaliation. So this does not produce any benefit for the Muslims and nor does it benefit those amongst whose ranks the bombs are detonated.<sup>98</sup>

Indeed, Allah ﷻ warned in the Quran:

وَاتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

**And beware the affliction which affects not in particular those of you who do wrong (but may also harm innocents). And know that Allah is strict in punishment.**<sup>99</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Ibn Uthaymīn in *Sharh Riyādh-us-Sālibīn* (1/124).

<sup>99</sup> The Quran, Sura al-A'arāf [8]:25.


In short, the justification of suicide bombing through the *hadīth* about the People of the Ditch is from the weakest of extrapolations, is made by those with no solid grounding in the scholastic sciences of Islam, and is regurgitated only in the cyber-literature of suicide bombing apologists.

## The Analogy of Nidal Hasan

Username NidalHasan – apparently the same U.S. Army Maj. Nidal Hasan charged with the Fort Hood Shooting – believed that suicide bombing is justified in Islam. Seemingly disappointed that this paper (or, at least, its earlier draft) had deconstructed the largely *qiyās*-based arguments repeatedly advanced in support of suicide bombings, NidalHasan put forward his own analogy:

There was a grenade thrown among a group of American soldiers. One of the soldiers, feeling that it was too late for everyone to flee jumped on the grenade with the intention of saving his comrades. Indeed he saved them. He intentionally took his life (suicide) for a noble cause i.e. saving the lives of his soldier. To say that this soldier committed suicide is inappropriate. It is more appropriate to say he is a brave hero that sacrificed his life for a more noble cause. Scholars have paralleled this to suicide bombers whose intention, by sacrificing their lives, is to help save Muslims by killing enemy soldiers. If one suicide bomber can kill 100 enemy soldiers because they were caught off guard that would be considered a strategic victory. Their intention is not to die because of some despair. The same can be said for the Kamikazees in Japan. They died (via crashing their planes into ships) to kill the enemies for the homeland. You can call them crazy if you want but their act was not one of suicide that is despised by Islam. So the scholars main point is that “IT SEEMS AS THOUGH YOUR INTENTION IS THE MAIN ISSUE” and Allah (SWT<sup>100</sup>) knows best.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> SWT is a popular abbreviation for “*Subhānahu wa Ta‘āla* (Glorified and Exalted be He),” represented throughout this document by the calligraphic Arabic text: .

<sup>101</sup> <http://scribd.com/NidalHasan>, May 20, 2009 [accessed: November 7, 2009]

## Analysis

NidalHasan is equating the saving of lives through a brave and noble act of self-sacrifice to the act of a suicide bomber. It is not known which scholars NidalHasan is alluding to, but only the possessor or a truly warped sense of logic could draw a direct parallel between a human bomb and a human shield.

Indeed, if a believing soldier were to fall onto a grenade or otherwise place himself in harms way to protect his comrades, this would be counted as a praiseworthy act of self-sacrifice. Technically a suicidal act, yes, but also, in sharia terms, an act of martyrdom. So, username NidalHasan is correct in this specific regard.

However, in such an instance, the principal objective behind the risk to one's own person is *not* to harm the enemy, but to protect one's companions. This was the intention of those from the most noble and bravest of Companions at the Battle of Uhud – Talha, Sa'ad, Abu Dujāna and Abu 'Ubayda رضي الله عنهم – as discussed earlier.

As regards the suicide bomber's intention, which username NidalHasan also raised, then he is, again, correct... up to a point.

The intention, if it be to cause carnage and chaos amongst the oppressors and enemies of Islam, is a noble intention. It cannot and should not be equated to those selfish, irresponsible individuals who kill themselves out of despair, depression or desperation.

Allah سبحانه mentions the saying of Prophet Y'aqūb<sup>102</sup> عليه السلام to his sons:

وَلَا تَيْأَسُوا مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يَيْأَسُ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

**And never give up hope of Allah's Mercy. Certainly, no one despairs of Allah's Mercy, except the people who disbelieve.**<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup> That is, the prophet of God, Jacob.

<sup>103</sup> The Quran, Sura Yūsuf [12]:87.

And He ﷺ also mentions the saying of Prophet Ibrāhīm<sup>104</sup> عليه السلام to His angels:

قَالَ وَمَنْ يَقْنَطُ مِنْ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلَّا الضَّالُّونَ

**He said: “And who despairs of the Mercy of his Lord except those who are astray!”<sup>105</sup>**

Nevertheless, an absence of despair is not enough to raise a blameworthy suicide to a praiseworthy martyrdom. Yes, it is well-known that the Prophet ﷺ said:

Verily, deeds are but by the intentions (behind them).<sup>106</sup>

But this does not negate a crucial condition: For any deed to be acceptable in Islam, both the intention *and* the action have to comply with the sharia in general, if not the *Sunna* of Muhammad ﷺ specifically. This conditional clause is known in the Islamic sciences as *Al-Ikhlās wal-Mutabi'a*.<sup>107</sup>

As the righteous scholar of Islam, Fudayl ibn 'Iyyād, explained:

And the action, if it is sincere but not correct, is not accepted. And if it is correct but not sincere, then it is not accepted. It is only accepted when it is both sincere and correct. And it is sincere (only) when it (the intention) is for the sake of Allah (alone), and (it is only) correct when it is done according to the *Sunna*.

Or, as Allah ﷻ says in His Book:

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

<sup>104</sup> That is, the prophet of God, Abraham.

<sup>105</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Hijr [15]:56.

<sup>106</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*.

<sup>107</sup> Lit.: Sincerity (of intention) and Following (the Prophet Muhammad's *Sunna* ﷺ).

**So whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none in the worship of his Lord.**<sup>108</sup>

That is, **'let him work righteousness'** by acting according to the *Sunna* and **'associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord'** through a sincere intention. Thus far, no evidence presented in favour of suicide bombing has substantiated it as an action being in compliance with the *Sunna*, even though the intention may have been worthy.

And Shaykh Ibn Uthaymīn stated in his *fatwa*:

However, if a person has done this (act of suicide bombing) based upon misinterpretation, thinking that it is permissible, then we hope that he will be saved from sin. But as for martyrdom being written for him, then no, since he has not taken the path of martyrdom (because his action is not in accordance with the *Sunna*).<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Kahf [18]:110.

<sup>109</sup> Shaykh Muhammad Sālih ibn Uthaymīn in *Sharh Riyādh-us-Sālihīn* (1/124).

## Conclusion

Allah ﷻ mentioned in the Quran:

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ قَالَ أَأَسْجُدُ لِمَنْ خَلَقْتَ طِينًا

**And (remember) when We said to the angels: “Prostrate unto Adam.” They prostrated except Iblīs (the Satan). He said: “Shall I prostrate to one whom You created from clay?”<sup>110</sup>**

Here, Iblīs, the accursed Satan, argues with his Lord and Creator, Allah. To justify his avoiding complying with Allah’s order, Satan drew an analogy between himself, being a *jinn* created from smokeless fire,<sup>111</sup> and Adam, being a man created from clay. He, the devil, basically said: How can the once created from something (allegedly) superior prostrate before an (allegedly) inferior being?

In reference to Satan’s deceitful mode of argumentation, the scholars of the *Sunna* consider any verdict derived from comparative deduction which contradicts a clear Islamic text to be *Qiyās Iblāsi* – Satanic Analogy. All attempts to suggest the permissibility of suicide bombing in light of the Quran and the *Sunna*, which can be seen to indeed suggest the contrary, fall into the realm of Satanic Analogy.

Allah ﷻ warns in His Book:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُواتِ الشَّيْطَانِ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ خُطُواتِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَإِنَّهُ يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

**O you who believe! Follow not the footsteps of Satan. And whosoever follows the footsteps of Satan, then (know that), verily he (only) commands criminal indecency and evil.<sup>112</sup>**

<sup>110</sup> The Quran, Sura al-Isrā’ [17]:61.

<sup>111</sup> See the Quran, Sura al-Hijr [15]:27 and Sura ar-Rahmān [55]:15.

<sup>112</sup> The Quran, Sura an-Nūr [24]:21.



There are many other things we could say regards suicide bombing, such as how many of those who sign up to blow themselves up are often complete basket cases who are exploited by their more cunning and cowardly commanders; with many so-called human bombs often displaying advanced signs of psychosis and schizophrenia, erratic or abnormal behavior, and even flagrant violations of the sharia in the build-up to their self-sacrifice. But that's another story.

Suffice to say: whether or not one sincerely believes suicide bombing is justified in Islam, the evidences presented in the writings of Al-Qaeda and their supporters, such as the essay, *The Islamic Ruling on the Permissibility of Martyrdom Operations*, certainly fail to prove so.