



Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the  
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### **The involvement of women in suicide bombing attacks:**

Since September 2000, Palestinian women have perpetrated **7 suicide bombing attacks in which 37 Israelis were killed and over 280 were wounded**. An analysis of the female suicide terrorists' social background and motives reveals a common characteristic: prior to perpetrating the attacks, most of them were pushed to the **fringes of society** having violated the strict code of moral conduct obligatory for women in the conservative Palestinian Muslim society. **By perpetrating the attacks, such women atone for their sins, thus becoming martyrs and attaining glory and eternal life in paradise.**

#### **Abstract**

- On January 14, 2004, **Reem Saleh al-Riyashi**, a female Hamas suicide bomber, detonated herself in the industrial zone in the vicinity of Erez crossing in the Gaza Strip. The attack left 3 soldiers and one civilian dead and 10 more wounded.
- Reem al-Riyashi is the **seventh female suicide bomber** to perpetrate a suicide bombing attack since the outbreak of hostilities in September 2000. During the course of the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli violent confrontation, Israeli security forces have **arrested (as of March 2004) 24 women intent on perpetrating suicide bombing attacks**, which so far have **claimed the lives of 37 people and left over 280 wounded**.
- Previous suicide bombing attacks perpetrated by Palestinian women were planned and coordinated by **Fatah's Tanzim** (4 attacks) and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (2 attacks). The incident at Erez crossing was **the first suicide bombing attack perpetrated by a Palestinian Muslim woman who had been dispatched by Hamas**.
- By using female terrorists to perpetrate suicide bombing attacks, the Palestinian terrorist organizations draw upon the women's **innocent appearance**, assuming that a woman who looks gentle and non-threatening will arouse less suspicion than a man, both on her way to and during her presence in Israel proper. In this way, such women were used as deadly human bombs to attack Israeli targets.

#### **Main characteristics of the seven female Palestinian suicide bombers**

- What follows are the main characteristics, including the social background and motives, of the seven female suicide bombers and the attacks they perpetrated.

**January 14, 2004: Reem Saleh al-Riyashi**, a female suicide bomber dispatched by Hamas, perpetrated a suicide bombing attack at the Erez workers terminal in the Gaza Strip. The attack left 4 Israelis dead and 10 more wounded.

**The code of conduct violation:** Reem al-Riyashi was at odds with her husband and her family; at the same time, she was closely and intimately involved with a Hamas operative.



Reem Saleh al-Riyashi,

- **October 4, 2003: Hanadi Jaradat**, a female suicide bomber dispatched by the **Palestinian Islamic Jihad** in Jenin, detonated herself at Maxim restaurant in Haifa. **The attack left 21 Israeli civilians dead and 48 wounded. The code of conduct violation:** Hanadi Jaradat was a lawyer, a 29-year-old single woman, who was involved in an intimate romantic relationship with her fiancé; such relationships prior to marriage are anything but common practice in Palestinian society. Another possible reason for her action may have been her wish to avenge the death of her fiancé, a Palestinian Islamic Jihad operative who was killed in a clash with IDF troops.



Hanadi Jaradat

- **May 19, 2003: Hiba Azem Daraghmeh**, a female suicide bomber dispatched by the **Palestinian Islamic Jihad**, detonated herself at Kanyon ha-Amakim, a shopping mall in Afula (a city southeast of Haifa). **The attack left 3 Israeli civilians dead and 50 wounded. The motive behind the attack:** Hiba Daraghmeh was a single religious student from Tubas; it appears that she perpetrated the suicide bombing attack to **avenge** the death of her brother who had previously been held under arrest in Israel.



Hiba Azem Daraghmeh

• **April 12, 2002: Andalib Suleiman al-Taqatiqah**, a 21-year-old Fatah's Tanzim operative from Bethlehem, detonated herself at Mahane Yehuda market in Jerusalem. **The attack left 6 civilians dead and over 60 wounded. The code of conduct violation:** **Andalib Suleiman al-Taqatiqah** apparently perpetrated the suicide bombing attack to redeem herself for her alleged extra-marital sexual relations with a Fatah operative. According to one version, she even became pregnant with his child.



Andalib Suleiman al-Taqatiqah

- **March 29, 2002: Aayat al-Akhras**, an 18-year-old female from Dehaishe refugee camp (located in the vicinity of Bethlehem), was dispatched by the **Fatah's Tanzim** organization to perpetrate a suicide bombing attack at a supermarket in the neighborhood of Kiryat Yovel in Jerusalem. **Two Israeli civilians died and 22 were wounded in the attack. The code of conduct violation:** Aayat al-Akhras was an 18-year-old single woman and an outstanding high school student; she was recruited by her fiancé, a Fatah's Tanzim operative. Apparently, she was engaged in a pre-marital sexual relationship with her fiancé and probably became pregnant with his child.



Aayat al-Akhras

- **February 27, 2002:** Female suicide bomber **Dareen Abu Aisheh**, a resident of Beit Wazan in Northern West Bank, was dispatched by the **Fatah's Tanzim** organization to perpetrate a suicide bombing attack in the vicinity of the **Maccabim roadblock (some 20 kilometers west of Jerusalem). Two Israeli policemen were wounded** in the attack. **The social background and motives behind the attack:** A 22-year-old divorced woman, Dareen Abu Aisheh was known as a pious Muslim. Within several months after her divorce, her former husband and her brother were killed in clashes with IDF troops. According to Palestinian sources, she addressed **Hamas** operatives on several occasions asking them to carry out a suicide bombing attack against Israel; however, she was rejected. Eventually, she was dispatched to perpetrate a suicide bombing attack by **Fatah** operatives.



Dareen Abu Aisheh

- **January 27, 2002:** Suicide bomber **Wafa' Idris**, a resident of Ramallah, perpetrated in Jerusalem the **first suicide bombing attack** planned and coordinated by the **Fatah's Tanzim organization (assisted by the Palestinian General Intelligence). One Israeli civilian was killed and 90 were wounded** in the attack. **The code of conduct violation:** Wafa' Idris was a lower-class fatherless Palestinian refugee who got divorced after 9 years of childless marriage. This

made her into an outsider in Palestinian society: a barren divorced woman who returned to her parents' house and became a financial burden on her family.

The making of a myth: The cover of a book titled "Wafa' Idris and other Palestinian Tales" by Muhammad Salmawi, published in Egypt (2002). The book highly praises female suicide bomber Wafa' Idris in particular, and expresses support of acts of Palestinian suicide bombing attacks against Israel in general.



### The involvement of Palestinian women in deadly terrorist attacks:

- The use of women by the Palestinian terrorist organizations is not limited to suicide bombing attacks alone:
  - The kidnapping and murder of Israeli teenager **Ofir Rahum** (January 17, 2001) was carried out with the assistance of **Amani Mona**, a female journalist and **Fatah** operative from Ramallah.
  - The suicide bombing attack at Sbarro restaurant in the heart of Jerusalem was perpetrated on August 9, 2001 with the assistance of a woman. The suicide terrorist, a **Hamas** operative, was transported to the site of the attack by **Ahlam Tamimi**, a female journalist of Jordanian descent residing in Ramallah, who was also involved in gathering intelligence for the planned suicide bombing attack. Ahlam Tamimi was also responsible for setting an explosive charge camouflaged in a beer can at a supermarket in Jerusalem on July 30, 2001.
  - On August 3, 2001, the **Hamas** movement attempted to use Nablus resident **Iman Asha** to set an explosive charge in Tel-Aviv's central bus station.
  - On August 31, 2001, an explosive charge carried by ' **Abir Hamdan**, a resident of Nablus, detonated during her journey from Tulkarm to Nablus, probably as a result of a "work accident" that occurred in the course of preparations for a suicide bombing attack that was to be perpetrated in a restaurant in Hadera (a city situated some 50 kilometers north of Tel-Aviv). 'Abir Hamdan, associated with **Fatah**, was killed as a result of the explosion. **Her previous romantic relationships with a number of men earned her a bad reputation.**

### Main characteristics of the Palestinian female suicide bombers: Women who were pushed to the fringes of Palestinian society

- An analysis of the Palestinian female suicide bombers' characteristics, social background and motives therefore reveals that most of them were **pushed to the fringes of Palestinian society for violating a Muslim conservative strict code of conduct obligatory for Palestinian women**. For some of the women, the motive was also **vengeance** for the deaths of relatives and loved ones killed in the course of the ongoing Palestinian violent confrontation with Israel.

To be more precise, one must keep in mind that in the conservative Muslim Palestinian society, a woman who is involved in an intimate relationship with a man, whether outside or prior to marriage, violates a strict and unforgivable code of conduct and is therefore considered to be promiscuous, giving a bad name to both herself and her family. More than once, this has led to so-called "honor killings", defined by UNICEF as a practice "in which men kill female relatives in the name of family 'honor' for forced or suspected sexual activity outside

marriage ." **Often, the distress of these women is cynically used by Palestinian terrorist organizations to harness them to suicide bombing attacks as a way to clear their names and protect their families' honor.**

- In such cases, Palestinian women, both those who are said to be devoted to Islam and those who conduct more secular or free lifestyle, eventually become willing (or unwilling?) tools (victims), i.e., deadly human bombs exploited for the sake of the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli confrontation. This aspect of the confrontation reflects the still rather inferior status of Palestinian women, especially those pushed to the fringes of Palestinian society, who are forced to perpetrate (or be involved in) such deadly attacks against Israel. This way, however, such women atone for their sins by becoming martyrs, thus also attaining glory and eternal life in paradise.

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