

to the website that eventually became the Bahá'í Library Online.)

I.

Introduction

The face of Islam is, to the West, often a bloody one. Islam, seen as a religion born in the harsh and unforgiving desert, is commonly believed to be the religion of the sword.[1] Its holy book speaks frequently and at times proudly of the sufferings of prophets (e.g. 7:94-5), its fighters seek the glory of death on the holy battlefield, its early mystics sought spiritual martyrdom through harsh ascetic practices, and its Shi'is annually beat themselves bloody in commemoration of a long-dead icon. In recent politics, Islam is often associated with a religious fanaticism that motivates, not simply terrorism, but suicide terrorism.

Portrayals of Islam in the contemporary media further strengthen this image of violence and martyrdom. The jacket blurb on a dimestore paperback concludes that "Western people...ignore the strength of jihad at their peril--for it knows no compromise." [2] A two-month-long monitoring of Reuters "World News" headlines [see below] revealed that, of the twenty-three articles which mentioned Islam, twenty were exclusively reports of Muslim military activity in which clear connections were drawn between the news-making actions and the participants' adherence to Islam.[3] A more formal study of violence in

contemporary politics examined the forty-two primary armed conflicts identified as active in 1994. Twenty of these cases displayed overt religious factors, and of these twenty, Islam was involved in sixteen.[4]

Despite the disproportionately large involvement Islam has in both modern conflicts and in the popular portrayal of these, the common perception of Islam itself being a violent religion is unwarranted. That Islam de-emphasizes outwardly-directed violence is indicated by its name itself--the meaning of the Arabic root S-L-M, from which islam and muslim

are derived, is "peace" and "submission." As well, Islam de-emphasizes inwardly-directed

violence for, unlike certain other of the world's major religions, there does not seem to exist a strong thread of martyrdom in Islam. However, in the few aspects

of Islam in which suffering and martyrdom do figure, such as those listed above,

they figure quite prominently.

Tracing the theme of jihad through Islamic history would demonstrate a great variety of meanings of the term and spheres of its application. To explore some of these while avoiding a chaotic presentation of too-numerous and unconnected instances of jihad, this study will focus exclusively on the earliest and the contemporary arenas. Thereby we can better evaluate the strength and influence of this thread within the religion as a whole and judge

the meaning of martyrdom for Sunni Islam. Since the doctrine of jihad is multi-faceted, bringing into its sphere such diverse considerations as violence, politics, power struggles, military history, and theology, a central pin is needed to better anchor the examination of jihad. Martyrdom, the pinnacle statement of belief and the most purely religious event within jihad, will serve as a focal point of the examination. The nature of jihad as a legal construct (because a communal, not individual, obligation),^[5] though of central import in understanding jihad, will thus not be addressed here.

A brief background of martyrdom in its various manifestations in Islam will complete the introduction. The themes of suffering, pain, asceticism, sacrifice, and martyrdom find three primary loci in Islam. First is the most obvious meaning of martyrdom: someone who dies for his or her religion. In Islamic history this aspect of martyrdom has played out the most in conjunction with jihad, usually translated as "holy war." Some branches of Islam declare participation in jihad to be one of the key requirements for all able-bodied male Muslims. The Qur'an declares that "those who are slain in Allah's way" are not dead, but alive (3:169),^[6] and this has often been interpreted to mean

that any fighter who is killed in a jihad attains automatic salvation.

Though most Muslims came to renounce holy war as an honorable pursuit, a characteristic of the early community and among extremists today is a zeal for fighting "in Allah's way" and attaining martyrdom.

During the first centuries following the ministry of Muhammad the Muslim community actively sought great territorial expansion for the new Islamic empire. In these years the martial aspect of jihad was strongly emphasized, for, as it lent a spiritual justification and even exhortation to war, it proved to be an effective motivator of conquest. Within the first two centuries the vast majority of the Muslim conquests had been achieved, and, largely under Sufi influence, the spiritual aspect of jihad began outweighing the martial; for the majority of Muslim thought the term has now come to mean primarily a striving in the practice of religion, of individual betterment. The contemporary emphasis of jihad is that which is most infamous among the Western world today: the jihad against Israel and the West, carried out by an extremist and often suicidal minority.

A second arena of the spectrum of martyrdom is the mystics' asceticism, what can be termed "living martyrdom." Many Sufis, like their mystically-leaning counterparts in all religions, elevated voluntary suffering to a spiritual practice. The demographics of what we could term "mystical martyrdom" are minimal, in that the number of mystics who have actually died through their practices, either by being executed as heretics or through harmful ascetic practices, is quite small. However, the cultural impact of mystical martyrdom is immense.

By the third century A.H. the wars of conquest were all but over, and the concepts of both jihad and martyrdom began undergoing a subtle shift. Since the opportunity to die in the prosecution of God's cause was all but

gone, alternate forms of martyrdom were sought. Hadith report that there are other types of martyrdom besides being killed in Allah's cause, including various forms of death by illness and accident, death while on pilgrimage, during pregnancy, or even the death of anyone who expires while in the process of fighting against his own temptations.[7]

Jihad suffered similar shifts in meaning. It came to be seen as more an internal, spiritual struggle than a political one, and other types of sacrificial moral duties such as fasting and alms-giving came to be a preferred substitute for martyrdom.[8] The jihad

that remained was a modified one. It was no longer the jihad bi al-sayf, "struggle by means of the sword," but the jihad al-nafs, the struggle against one's lower natures, nafs. The glory of pain in the path of the divine Beloved and the yearning for suffering and death on the spiritual path as subsequently highlighted by the Sufis have found expression in all of the arts in all branches of Islam.

A third area of the theology of martyrdom and its host of relata is without doubt the most conspicuous: Shi'ah Islam. The party of 'Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law, was from the first a group of people that found its self-definition in being a persecuted minority but that believed itself to be following the true heritage of the Prophet. This easily translated into an agenda of fighting for the manifest truth and yet being resigned to consistently losing. The murder of Husayn, 'Ali's son, became a focal point for the community's sense of justified rebellion. Largely since this was an impotent rebellion--the Shi'is being a political and demographic minority--the community's ethos became an introspective one of mourning and of heightened spirituality. The concepts of martyrdom and suffering have reached a level of pathos in Shi'ism almost unmatched in the history of religion.

The history of Shi'i thought and religious belief differs rather markedly in places from that of Sunni Islam, such that different justifications tend to motivate martyrdom for Shi'is than for Sunnis. In contemporary praxis, however, the ethos of suffering in the path of Husayn which separates the Shi'i from the Sunni makes little difference. For the most part, then, we can examine the theology of jihad-inspired martyrdom without taking such party affiliation into account.

This study will not address either the psychology of martyrdom, nor its sociological actualizations, nor its underlying theological motivations in a great deal of depth, for each of the above would require its own dedicated study.[9] Instead, it will touch briefly upon some of the main textual foundations behind jihad and martyrdom and its most conspicuous historical manifestations, namely in the early community and in the contemporary world. Some common interpretations of violence and martyrdom in classical and modern Islam can then be critiqued.

II.

Jihad

in the early period

While much of the Islamic theology of jihad predates Islam--Islam was

born in a harsh, demanding environment where fighting was common--the theology of martyrdom and suffering as encapsulated in the Qur'an was a wholly new concept for the Arabs. The first sources of Muslim conceptions of martyrdom are to be found in the Qur'an, and especially in its doctrine of jihad.

Jihad has had different emphases at different times. It is usually translated as "holy war," and in the Qur'an the term can clearly convey the meaning of fighting (e.g. 9:73, 9:81, 9:86, 25:52, 66:9). This, however, is but one of its uses.[10] The various meanings of

jihad as found in the Qur'an can be broken down into the following broad categories. First, Jihad is the allegiance which one must hold before all others: "If it be that your...kindred; the wealth that ye have gained;...or the dwellings in which ye delight--are dearer to you than Allah, or His Messenger, or the striving[11] in His cause, then...Allah guides not the rebellious" [i.e. this is not per Allah's wishes]; Second, it is the way to confront the non-Muslims: "listen not to the Unbelievers, but strive against them with the utmost strenuousness" (25:52); Third, it is the definitive way to conduct one's daily life as a Muslim: "And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive" (22:78), and "The (true) believers are those only who believe in Allah and His messenger and afterward doubt not, but strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah" (49:15, Pickthal); Fourth, it is a requirement for entering paradise: "deemed ye that ye would enter paradise while yet Allah knoweth not those of you who really strive?" (3:142, Pickthal); Fifth, it can simply be a synonym for fighting: "[A] Sura comes down, enjoining them to believe in Allah and to strive and fight along with His Messenger..." (9:86)[12]

Hadith, as this from Sahih Bukhari, also express the importance Muhammad is reported to have placed on jihad:

'I asked the Prophet 'Which deed is loved most by Allah?' He replied, 'To offer prayers at their early (very first) stated times.'" 'Abdullah asked, "What is the next (in goodness)?" The Prophet said, "To be good and dutiful to one's parents," 'Abdullah asked, "What is the next (in goodness)?" The Prophet said, To participate in Jihad for Allah's Cause." (Volume 8, Book 73, Number 1)[13]

This emphasis the Qur'an and hadith place on jihad, whichever its meaning, led to jihad becoming "canonized" as one of the key doctrines of Islam. The majority of Muslims define the religion as having five "pillars," or basic articles of faith and practice. The five usually given are the profession of faith "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger," ritual prayer, giving alms, fasting during Ramadan, and making the pilgrimage to Mecca. While both scholars and apologists alike often deny that jihad could be considered a sixth pillar,[14] there have been extremist groups of Muslims that declared it thus. The radical Khariji sect was the first to declare holy war an inescapable duty, and explicitly defined it as the sixth pillar of Islam.[15] More recently a few movements in the modern

Middle East have elevated jihad to an extremist level, such as Egypt's Takfir wa al-Hijra group and Jamaat al-Jihad and Palestine's Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. Nonetheless, whether jihad is officially canonized as a sixth pillar, its status as a duty for all able-bodied Muslims is universally accepted.[16]

Three distinct Qur'anic and hadith themes--the call to war, the call to martyrdom, and the martyr's reward--proved a powerful and volatile combination. Textual quotes will demonstrate this. Despite that jihad often has a non-martial sense, many other verses in the Qur'an do clearly call for war. Surah al-Baqara features a most clear and perhaps even unforgiving call to arms:

"Fight[17] in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors. And slay them wherever you catch them...If they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward for those who reject faith....And fight them on until there is no more persecution.... (2:190-193)[18]

Other passages in the Qur'an explain that martyrdom in the cause of God is a means to enter paradise:

"Think not of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance from their Lord. They rejoice in the Bounty provided by Allah...the (Martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve. They rejoice in the Grace and the Bounty from Allah, and in the fact that Allah suffereth not the reward of the Faithful to be lost (in the least)." (3:169-71)[19]

Such passages as these provide much of the rationale for a further theological position: not only does a martyr in the cause of God enter paradise, but he does so automatically--his admission is guaranteed. Many hadith elaborate on this theme. Sahih Bukhari provides two key texts:

Allah's Apostle said, "Someone came to me from my Lord and gave me the news that if any of my followers dies worshipping none along with Allah, he will enter Paradise." I asked, "Even if he committed adultery and theft?" He replied, "Even if he committed adultery and theft." (Volume 2, Book 23, Number 329)

Allah's Apostle said, "Allah guarantees [the martyr] that He will either admit him into Paradise or return him with reward or booty he has earned to his residence from where he went out." (Volume 9, Book 93, Number 555)

Further rewards, as reported by hadith, are that the fighter in God's cause will, if killed in the struggle, receive privileges otherwise unattainable: he or she escapes the examination in the grave by the "interrogating angels"; he does not need to pass through barzakh, the purgatory limbo; he receives the highest of ranks in paradise, sitting near the throne of God--Muhammad described the "house of martyrs," dar al-shuhada', as the most beautiful abode of paradise; on the Day of Judgment any wounds the martyr received in

battle will shine and smell like musk; his death as a martyr frees him of all sin such that he does not require the intercession of the Prophet; he is purified by his act and so he alone is not washed before burial.[20] The popular understanding of the Qur'anic descriptions of this paradise for the believer (martyr or not) could not but be of the greatest appeal to the desert-dwelling nomad: awaiting him is a garden of cool breezes, beautiful companions, couches, fruit and drink, and nearness to God. Particularly deserving martyrs are even eligible for double the standard reward, some hadith report.[21] This is an incentive so great that the Prophet is reported to have said that no one who dies, even if he or she enters paradise, "would wish to come back to this world," even if he or she were to be given ownership of "the whole world and whatever is in it," except the martyr who, "on seeing the superiority of martyrdom, would like to come back to the world and get killed again." [22] Finally, the martyr enacts the greatest act of worship possible for a human, for only he, the shahid, witnesses to, shahida, God Himself.

These three distinct themes, one emphasizing the importance of jihad in its variety of meanings and the other two shedding glory on martyrdom, proved to be a powerful combination for both early and contemporary Islam. The battles the community fought became greater and greater--first against opposing tribes within Mecca, then against another city, and finally against almost all countries in the area. Concomitant with this, the host of rewards awaiting the martyr became more extensive. While it is not provable that Muhammad intentionally created the dialectic between jihad and the martyr's reward in paradise for the sake of encouraging his followers to battle on his behalf, there is no doubt that the dialectic was employed to that end in the early community. The rewards awaiting the martyr were so wondrous, it was widely related, that he alone among men would wish to return to this world and be killed again and again.[23] When, in the early years A.H., the world was officially divided between the "House of Islam" and the "House of War," the theology of martyrdom was strong enough to provide a highly motivated and zealous fighting force. This religiously motivated zeal proved sufficient to allow a full century of Muslim conquests--conquests which, history shows, mere political enthusiasm tends not inspire.[24]

The strength of the theology of martyrdom in encouraging war is further indicated by events in the early community's first civil war. In 656 A.D. 'Uthman, the third leader of the community following Muhammad, was assassinated. His killing seems to have been purely for political reasons, but the contending sides of 'Ali versus Talha, Zubayr, and 'A'isha used it as a key justificatory event. After a series of skirmishes, when the opponents and their arbiters met in 659 to examine the murder of 'Uthman and decide blame, it seems to have been largely an excuse for the party of 'Ali to try to consolidate his leadership and for his opponents to seize it.[25] 'Uthman was treated as a martyr for, while contending claims for leadership of the community was the core issue of the war for both sides, seeking to lay blame and enact revenge for his death was the

alleged key issue.

III.

Jihad in the contemporary world

An aspect of martyrdom that seems the most horrific, is frequently addressed by Western scholars and polemicists alike, and is most quickly rejected and denounced by the majority of Muslim apologists today,[26] is the jihad seen in the contemporary

Middle East. Since the end of the Second World War and the creation of the state of Israel Muslim terrorism in the Middle East has become more and more common. The theologies of jihad and martyrdom have become topical to a level not seen since the period of the Crusades. However, unlike with the earlier manifestations of jihad, the modern Muslim world now features no centralized authority for interpreting scripture and applying the resulting religious judgements to the civil sphere. Hence, jihad is now, as a recent article states, "freelance": "the result is that almost any band of Muslim malcontents who resent the way the world has treated them can read in the Koran a moral warrant for the most nuance-blind carnage." [27]

There are numerous possible explanations behind the renewed and newly-fanatical emphasis some place on martyrdom. First is the century-old response to European colonialism. The influx and even invasion of the Arab homelands by the West clearly and simply prompted a defensive reaction from many Muslims and sparked, as a counter-reaction, the creation of many reform movements, both the liberal, adaptive and the conservative, reactive. There were new calls to jihad against what often seemed a modern successor to the Crusades.[28] The occasionally

"fundamentalist"[29] reaction to colonialism

took a more religious form in 1929, when Palestinian justifications for the "Wailing Wall Riots" were couched in religious terms,[30] and then was further enflamed by the forced

creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the loss of the holy city of Jerusalem in 1967. Many Muslims interpreted these two events as signs that the liberal and adaptive type of response to colonialism was the wrong approach--traditional Islam had to be fortified, often by jihad, to bolster it against its Western and Jewish enemies. As if to provide an affirmation of this sentiment, the success of the Arab oil embargo of 1973 and the overthrow of the American-supported Iranian shah in 1979 both spoke to a newly-found independence and strength of the Muslim world contra the West.[31]

John Esposito sees grounds for a new emphasis on Muslim violence in this fall and rise of Muslim nationalistic and religious self-esteem in polar reaction to the influences of the West. Included among the characteristics of the revivalistic framework he describes are the failure of Islamic secularization and liberalism; the reestablishment of an orthodox shari'ah; an expanded definition of Islam as a totalistic way of life--contrary to the spirit which long before separated the religious and the political spheres into caliphate versus sultanate, religious moralities must be reapplied to the political arena; the perception of a full attack on Islam by the united anti-Muslim front

of Western, Russian, and Zionist neocolonialism; and the proven illegitimacy of non-Muslim forms of life and government.[32]

All legitimate and perhaps even require a new and unforgiving jihad.

The form of jihad precipitated by what Esposito calls the "revivalist" framework is in many ways the diametric opposite of the inward-looking jihad of the previous millennium A.H. While the early community laid emphasis on both the jihad of the soul as well as the jihad against the unbelievers, and the later community, largely under Sufi influence, deemphasized the militant aspect and shifted the focus to the "greater" jihad of the struggle against the self, the contemporary prosecutors of jihad reversed the shift by deemphasizing the spiritual aspect and swinging the application of jihad to the other, militant, extreme.

Rudolph Peters, in his study *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History*, writes that Muslims fighting the new Western influence interpreted the stress on the jihad al-nafs as sabotage, that is, as an idea spread within Islam by its enemies purely to weaken Muslim combativeness. In response, then, these mujahidun spread their interpretation of jihad as an expressly militant requirement.[33]

Another factor encouraging extremist applications of jihad is that milder rhetoric and action has proven a disappointing failure in motivating contemporary revolutionary agendas. The killers of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat made it clear that by their actions they were hoping to spark a full-scale jihad, a hope frustrated by lack of popular support;[34] popular indignation over a 1988 killing of an

Egyptian police officer--a minor event by standards of contemporary Middle East history--prompted a newspaper article reporting the event to note "the prevalent view...that the fundamentalists do not have mass support and are not able to challenge the security forces militarily";[35] in the days prior to the Iranian revolution

men who were blatantly defying curfew by walking in the streets at night wearing white shrouds to signify their wish to be martyred by the military police would to their disappointment be left alone.[36] This widespread ambivalence to the

politico-religious radicals has often served only to further radicalize the extremist position and thereby encourage martyrdom as an activist statement.

Islamic revivalist Fayiz Azzam expressed this renewed call to violence in a speech to a gathering in Atlanta, Georgia in 1990. "Allah's religion," he said, "must offer skulls, must offer martyrs. Blood must flow. There must be widows, there must be orphans. Hands and limbs must be cut, and the limbs and blood must be spread everywhere in order that Allah's religion stand on its feet." [37] Besides the historically atypical radicalism

of the rhetoric expressed in this speech, another aspect stands out as unique: the call to martyrdom. It is this aspect of the new jihad that has in many ways become the most extreme manifestation of martyrdom in the entire spectrum of the Sunni tradition and one of the most extreme in the Shi'i.

Martyrdom in the contemporary prosecution of jihad has two principle functions: it furthers the mujahid's agenda through its unique military

efficacy, and it consolidates his or her movement and inspires its participants. The strategic efficacy of martyrdom in a military operation is explained simply. Some examples are that, first, the fighter who is willing or even eager to die can attack an enemy with greater fervor than the fighter who is concerned with self-preservation and consequently will fight with more restraint. Second, a terrorist prepared to die can plant a bomb or infiltrate an enemy position much more easily, for he or she has no need to prepare a means of escape and, since he or she will die, also has no need to be cautious about hiding tracks and evidence. Third, the logistics of a suicide attack are more straightforward; walking or driving into the area of attack with an explosive is less challenging than finding a means of sneaking an explosive into the area or detonating one at a distance. Fourth, only one willing to die can most effectively use one's own body as a military tool, as exemplified by the use of volunteers to clear land mines in the Iran-Iraq war. Fifth, the zeal of the martyr can both demoralize the enemy at the same time as inspire his own faction.[38]

The belief that martyrdom can strengthen the ideology behind a group's agenda is perhaps its chief appeal. At a celebration in Qum in 1990 a prominent mulla, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, is reported to have said to one of his disciples, "not all people are moved by ideas. Indeed, there are people who can be moved only by blood." [39] His case is an exemplary one in explaining this aspect. Al-Sadr expressed the strength of his belief in the efficacy of martyrdom by his own--in challenging the Ba'th party he guaranteed his eventual martyrdom. His death, as perhaps intended, proved a catalyst in advancing his agenda. A great variety of institutions were named after him, and the day of his death is commemorated religiously. An entire literature of inspirational stories are recounted of him, and he has become a chief figure motivating others in his party. One follower expressed the impact of al-Sadr's martyrdom with unusual bluntness in saying that his death was better than his life, in view of the tremendous contribution he made to the movement by dying the way that he did.[40]

The contemporary age offers unique opportunities for jihad fighters to utilize this function of jihad: the number of forms of media available to anyone with a degree of resourcefulness and intent is large, and their impact is increasing. The death of martyrs is one of the most commonly-advertised events on these media. This, in conjunction with the immediate and broadly-cast nature of modern media, allows for a power in rallying the fighters previously unattainable.

An overview of the use of media in glorifying martyrdom will help explain the religious function of contemporary martyrdom. The most simple medium is the billboard: it is reported that in Iran, and presumably elsewhere, one can see billboards with slogans and depictions of martyrs whose intent is to arouse sympathy in the viewer and arouse him to action.[41] Related to this is the informal billboard:

graffiti. Militant and pro-martyrdom slogans can often be seen in turbulent areas of the Middle East. Newsprint is perhaps the oldest of the modern media used to advertise martyrdom. Journalist E. F. Porter reports that the

nineteenth-century Muslim guerrilla fighters in Chechnya known as the Murids distributed sometimes-exaggerated news reports of their activities as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century.[42]

Radio and television, too, have been used to broadcast such incitative material, most notably the broadcasting of the rawda, the recitation of the sufferings of the Imam Husayn; however, being under state supervision, these media tend to be less radical in focus.

The newest medium, and the one with the least administrative control and hence greatest opportunity for extremism, is the internet, which contemporary religio-political groups advocating martyrdom have made rather extensive use of. For example, reports on the recent war in Chechnya were frequently mailed to internet listservs and Usenet groups to champion the Muslim fighters and publicize their deaths. While some of these "Chechen Jihad" sites offered updates on all aspects of the battles, such as the battle tactics, numbers of Russians killed, and political decisions by both sides, these aspects were presented rather matter-of-factly--it was the martyrdom of Chechen fighters that could draw the greatest stress. "We are deeply honored and proud to report to all Muslims the Martyrdom InshaAllah [sic] of one of our own faithful people in the land of Chechnya,"[43] said one; "Muslim fighters are telling us that they will fight until the last Martyr or the last Russian is sent home in a coffin"[44] read

another. The Palestinian activist organization Hamas, too, provides a central web page offering "periodic reports on the association's activities and the Islamic Resistance operations...welcom[ing] all suggestions and discussions concerning the support of the Resistance."[45]

Finally, propaganda in the simple use of names cannot be overlooked. Groups that announce their militant and often martyrdom-oriented aims in their very names include the Jamaat al-Jihad, or "Parties of Jihad," the Islamic Jihad, Hamas, which is an acronym for its full Arabic title "Movement of Islamic Resistance," and, most obviously, a conservative movement in Iran called the Fadayeen-i Islam, or "The Martyrs of Islam."

This proclamatory aspect of martyrdom is usually expressed as the core meaning of the martyrdom event. In an etymological coincidence, the words for "witness" and "martyr" are almost identical in Greek and Arabic. In Greek, a "witness" is *martus* and "to witness" as well as "to be or become a martyr"

is *marturein*. In Arabic, the root SH-H-D provides the meanings of both "witness" or "testimony" as well as

"martyr," and, by the definition given in Wehr's Arabic-English Dictionary, "one killed in battle with the infidels."[46] While *shahid* can have a

passive sense, i.e. "witnessed,"[47]

it is usually taken to mean that the martyr is one who witnesses to the sincerity

of his faith or political conviction through the ultimate proof--his own life.

This ultimate testimony has been seen as the most powerful tool for winning converts

to one's side, be it religious or political. A young village merchant speaking to a European sociologist defined well this most common justification for religious

martyrdom in saying "the blood shed by the Iranian martyrs is like the water of an irrigation canal which gives life to the crops. From it the religion will grow." [48]

Similarly, refrains chanted, published, and scrawled in graffiti in war-stricken

regions of the Middle East express this sentiment as a political justification.

A graffiti written on a home in Lebanon reads "Victory or Death...Kill us, then our nation will realize the truth more and more!" [49]

In the political sphere the application of the sense of martyr as "witness," i.e. one who demonstrates the truth of one's conviction, adds another dimension to the modern phenomenon of jihad as well as the martyr being a most effective fighter in prosecuting God's cause, he also testifies to its legitimacy by his willingness to die. It is this aspect of martyrdom which best helps interpret an apparent contradiction. The modern extremist form of jihad often features, and is notorious for, a new willingness to embrace suicide in the prosecution of the struggle and a new fervor in seeking martyrdom. Indeed, while these suicide operations can be called "freelance," they are not rogue--many of the political extremist groups operating in the Middle East officially sanction these actions and provide both logistical planning and materials [50] and as well aid and provide for the martyr's bereaved family and descendants. [51] Yet, the Qur'an expressly forbids suicide.

The Qur'an statement "make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction" (2:195) and the hadith teaching that anyone who dies by suicide will eternally reenact in hell the means by which he died (Sahih Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 23, Number 446) have been interpreted as a clear prohibition of suicide.

Scholarly apologia, leaders of resistance movements, and the testaments of their believing followers respond with a single refrain: dying in the course of fighting for God, even if it is a willed and voluntary death, is not suicide. When the fighter uses suicide as a military tactic, it is not a simple throwing away of life, but rather a purposeful sacrifice. If a terrorist bombing kills an enemy, even if the terrorist is himself killed in the process, a valid military objective has been attained and hence the terrorist's death is not suicide. Br. Abu Ruqaiyah, in his article "The Islamic Legitimacy of The 'Martyrdom Operations,'" quotes a hadith in support of this position: "It is said that, Abu Isaac once asked al-Bara'a Bin Azeb 'A man fights a thousand of enemies, then he is killed. Is he one of those whom Allah says about: "and do not cast yourselves into destruction,'" al-Bara'a said: 'No, let him fight to death.'" [52] Hizbollah leader Sheik Mohammed

Hussein Fiadfallah makes clear the fact that these apparent suicides are simply necessary military tactics. "We are obliged to use all the ways and possibilities to face the enemy," he said in an interview. "Due to our weak military possibilities, we were forced to use the weapon of human bodies to

make advances on the front." [53] Finally, twenty-seven year old Hizbollah fighter Abou Mahdi explained the place of suicide in this jihad from the standpoint of the fighter himself. "In the middle of the battlefield we don't think about death, but just to hurt and damage the enemy," he said, and "if it is our destiny to get killed, we accept the fact with pleasure, because we're looking for it." [54]

A psychological component further helps explain the justification for martyrdom in light of the prohibitions of suicide. One who is martyred is guaranteed of victory. Since the jihad is a religious as well as a political struggle, two levels of success can be recognized. On the political level only the complete conquest of one's side over the enemy's, e.g. the final downfall of the state of Israel, can be considered a victory--partial victory, such as capture of one region, might strengthen one's position but can not be considered a fulfillment of the objectives. On the religious level, however, victories are personal. One's judgment in the afterlife will not take into account such things as which state owns which cities, but rather will weigh one's individual actions in the cause of God. Therefore, the mujahid who dies in the struggle against God's enemies has achieved his or her personal victory and will receive his reward in the afterlife regardless of the logistical state of the battle. All manner of participants in the struggle, then, agree that martyrdom is not to be regarded as the goal of the struggle, but merely a possible and at times unavoidable side-effect of the fight. The fighter who is killed both achieves a personal victory as well as furthers the group's political position. Martyrdom is therefore justified as an Islamically legitimate sacrifice, not an illegitimate suicide.

IV.

Conclusions

There is no single most common or correct interpretation of the meaning of the term jihad, as can be seen in the above discussion. Not only has it had numerous layers of meaning and practical usage at any one time in Islamic history, but as well differing circumstances both external and internal to the religion have effected shifts of meaning and application. While this paper has presented two of the most conspicuous significances of jihad in two of its most easily delineated spheres of application--as a tool in the wars of conquest in the early period and as an often secular political agenda in the modern period--and has touched on a third--as a system of spiritual growth in the middle period--these diachronic divisions are largely artificial and all three of these chief meanings of jihad could often be found synchronically. As well, many more nuances and historical uses of the term could be distilled.

Focusing on jihad through the lens of martyrdom narrows the inspection of the concept to its purely religious senses. Outside the Muslim world martyrdom need not be and often is not a religious phenomenon--taxi drivers on a hunger strike for higher wages dying in a Mexican prison or a ship's captain sinking with his craft would not necessarily profess a transcendental cause for their actions. Usually, though, the martyr does invoke a higher, religious

power as justifying his or her death; even ostensibly political martyrs, such as the self-immolating Vietnamese Buddhist monk or the Japanese kamikaze pilot, would claim spiritual legitimation. In Islam, death through jihad is a wholly religious act.

The above discussion allows us to clarify now the reasons why martyrdom, even more than aspects such as spiritual striving, is the most uniquely religious aspect of jihad. First, Muhammad limited the proper sphere of war solely to fighting in the path of God: purely political conflicts, especially if internecine, did not constitute a just war (*bellum justum*) in the Prophet's philosophy.[55] Anyone killed while

fighting in one of these wars was thus not merely a dead soldier but was a witness to God. Another dimension which makes death in jihad wholly unlike death in a secular conflict is that the soldier in a political war would seek to defeat his adversary while preserving his own life. A death thereby incurred would be no more than an unfortunate accident. The soldier who dies in the path of God, however, accepts and embraces his death, for the religious backdrop to the jihad sacralizes his fate.[56] Third, the martyr in Islam is guaranteed a

unique reward--automatic admittance to heaven. Of the host of specific honors promised the martyr (see above), not one is other than religious, which implies that religion, not secular factors like political gain or strategic advantage, was at least nominally the chief justification for participating in a jihad.

In examining the meanings and practice of jihad in the foundational period and in modern Islam, we have seen that martyrdom has a few functions. Of these, two stand out as central: martyrdom is in many ways an unstated goal of the mujahid, especially as practiced in the early period, and the martyrdom is heroically exemplary, especially as practiced in the contemporary period.

Philosophers from Aristotle to Hobbes have declared that the tendency to make war is inherent to the human species, and Ibn Khaldun went so far as to trace its impetus back to creation itself.[57] The

Bedouins of Muhammad's time were no less warfaring than other early cultures, and likely were even more so. Muhammad both canalized and fortified this militant spirit, the first by channeling the practice of war to that conducive to God's cause only and the second by emphasizing and encouraging this practice as a duty of every male Muslim. Since he and the Qur'an declared such a *bellum justum* to be a religious obligation, and since the enemy was defined as the "Abode of War" antithetical to Islam and hence implicitly satanic, it followed that death in the prosecution of this sacred conflict was a religious honor and that the one dead deserved a unique station. The dead thus is a martyr and his martyrdom grants him a station higher than that otherwise achievable, as indicated by the abundance of rewards he alone is entitled to. As the pious Muslim would of course wish to attain the highest possible station, martyrdom inevitably became seen as an ultimate achievement.

Thus, whether intended by the Prophet and acknowledged by the community or not, death in jihad was a supreme and enviable achievement. The haste with

which Muslim apologists deny that martyrdom is suicide and quote official prohibitions of suicide (see above) further betrays a not-uncommon and perhaps even prevalent belief in at least the early community that martyrdom was indeed seen as a noble and desirous expression of one's religious faith.

History affords many examples of the use of martyrdom as a propaganda and inspirational tool, a use seen in all periods of Islam.[58] This phenomenon can be seen as the converse

of the above: for the individual believer, martyrdom becomes his private, religiously internalized goal, and then, through his sacrificial act, he makes public and advertises the goal to his fellow believers. The public aspect of martyrdom both serves to intimidate the enemy, by demonstrating the fervor and commitment of the martyr, and to inspire and vitalize his fellow fighters, by serving as a role model. Whether the martyr is demonstrating zeal and commitment, as by being willing to fight to the death, or endurance and steadfastness in his faith, as by submitting to torture rather than recant his or her political or religious allegiance, his act of dying for his beliefs elevates them to the capstone of his life, the crowning event of his participation in the group's struggle. Such a radicalizing of his belief serves, he would believe, to further unite those still living and consolidate their group identity and purpose.

The function and influence of this "exemplary" aspect can be best understood by what comparative religion terms charisma.[59] While in casual use charisma simply means

having a strong and attractive personality, its technical religious sense, as defined by sociologist Max Weber, is a virtue by which a person is "set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman...powers or qualities." [60] It is this extraordinary

power manifested by select individuals, Weber held, that can form religions.

This process is quite clear with Christianity, the religion which most influenced Weber's thought: Christ was seen as God incarnate, and making him the role model for one's life was paramount. Though both Christ's death and resurrection were the central events of his life, it was only the former that the worshipper, as mere human, could emulate, and hence the *imitatio Christi* focused almost exclusively on emulating his physical sufferings.[61]

Islam, however, does not lend itself to an

"*imitatio Muhammad*" in quite the same way, for Islam's prophet is, theologically, no more than a chosen human. The charismatic aspect is more depersonalized in Islam, and God and his Cause, not the messenger, is the focus of piety. When Muhammad defines God's cause as propagated by means of the jihad, then, the goal of martyrdom becomes almost a substitute for the human focus.

More than this, the comparative lack of human charismatic focus lends the martyr as exemplar a unique force in Islam. The history of Islam shows that many individuals who either acted in such significant ways as to attract followers or claimed spiritual roles became powerful socio-religious forces.

The many historical claimants to prophethood and the Shi'i's Imams are the two strongest examples of this, but the phenomenon can be seen more often in lesser

instances, namely the individuals who died for their cause and perhaps inadvertently became the champion of their cause.

Some or all of the following uses can be made of the martyr's death: the strength of his belief as attested to by his willingness to die for his cause can inspire and consolidate the commitment of his followers to their common cause; the strength of his belief as thereby attested can motivate to action those who sympathized with the cause but were not yet participants; relating and reciting the details of his sufferings can allow his coreligionists to experience his trauma vicariously and thereby evoke a level of sympathy which can further animate the group; the extent of the oppression of the system as evidenced by the system's willingness to kill the martyr can radicalize the polarity between the righteousness of the group's cause and the injustice of that against which they struggle; annual commemoration of the martyr's death can serve to keep his sacrifice alive and present in the group's memory and thus help to keep alive the aims and goals of the group; his death can be used as a newsworthy event which can be reported to the outside world in an attempt to elicit sympathy and external support.

The early and the contemporary periods in Islamic history show a variety of meanings of jihad and of martyrdom, such that, individually, no single definition of the former or phenomenological description of the latter can be found. However, the interplay between the two is more easily defined and can be broken down into the above few key descriptions. The understanding of jihad and martyrdom hereby attained can help in analyzing forces operating in both the formative and the modern eras of Islam and allow for both a comprehension and criticism of the agendas behind the many Islamic insurgencies witnessed in the contemporary Middle East and elsewhere.

Appendix

one:

Some background examples of the meanings of death in the history of religions

Martyrdom and its related, such as suffering, pain, asceticism, sacrifice, death, and resurrection, are principal phenomena in the religious experience, doubtless as central as birth and creation.

Many of the earliest texts known betray a strong interest in the religious significance of sacrifice and death. The earliest text of Hinduism, the Rig Veda, describes a "primal man" whom the gods sacrifice and from his body create the universe. "From this sacrifice offered up were born the Rig- and Sama-Vedas,...the common people,...the moon,...the sun,...the sky,...the earth....These were the first religious rites." [62] Other ancient texts depict a less voluntary

sacrifice in which primordial gods battle, the winner creating the cosmos from the body of the loser. Hesiod's Theogony, from the 10th-century B.C.E., reports horrific and incestuous battles in which gods create parts of the universe and other gods out of dismembered pieces of their own family members. [63] Perhaps the prototype, or at least

the oldest, of such myths is the Mesopotamian Enuma elish, dating from as early as 3,000 B.C.E. Here the young god Marduk battles the primordial goddess Tiamat. After killing her "he split her like a shellfish into two parts: half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky," and from her other half he constructed the moon, sun, and earth.[64] The

Pantheon of gods then investigates who incited Tiamat to rebel. Upon discovering the instigator, the god Kingu, they execute him in turn, and "out of his blood they fashioned mankind."

Both the ancient world and more recent agricultural societies manifest another type of death and sacrifice ceremony, that of the harvest god who is symbolically murdered in the autumn and resurrected in the spring. This theme presents a remarkable cross-cultural similarity: Egypt's Osiris, Greece's Demeter and Persephone, the Norse Odin, Babylonia's Tammuz/Greece's Adonis, and many others all embody the fall and rise of the seasons with their own deaths and resurrections.[65] The early Central

American cultures elevated the importance of human sacrifice to a frightful extreme. Not only was it paramount to sacrifice the largest number of unwilling victims, but inflicting as much pain as possible on them was essential. The priests committing these murders, too, would participate in the pain through elaborate self-mutilation ceremonies.[66]

The theological preoccupation with suffering and sacrifice is not merely a relic of ancient civilizations, but exists quite strongly in many of the world religions alive today. For example, the entire philosophy of the Buddha is literally predicated on suffering, dukkha, and its place as the most essential description of the human condition. Every human state other than nirvana is at root unsatisfactory and unpleasant--in short, suffering.[67] The world of the Ancient Near East was also

one in which the daily fact of suffering could occasionally reach horrific extremes. When Micah warns about "When the Assyrian invades our land and marches through our fortresses," (Micah 5:5) it was no idle threat, for the ancient Assyrians were widely famed for their fearsome brutality and sadistic cruelty. Shalmaneser the Third exults that in his ninth-century B.C.E.

expedition against Aleppo he cut down 14,000 fleeing soldiers, so many that "the plain was too small to let all their souls descend into the nether world." [68] In such an atmosphere the Judaic

prophets taught that the people's suffering provided lessons that nothing else could: only in suffering and exile could the true worth of freedom be appreciated and the quality of constancy be internalized. Only pain and suffering could enflame Israel to champion justice.[69]

It is in Christianity that the themes of suffering and sacrificial martyrdom find their most complete and developed embodiment. Jesus' death on the cross is the saving event par excellence, for not only is all humanity redeemed and saved by this act, and not only is it the theological core of Christianity, but more Jesus' death and resurrection is often viewed as the key event of the entire history of God's universe. Partly in emulation of Christ's voluntary death, numerous Christians submitted to or actively sought martyrdom in the first few centuries A.D., [70] and the Roman

Catholic church counts and commemorates 14,000 official martyrs in its history.[71] Asceticism as a practice of living martyrdom remained strong in Christian practice up through the time of the Enlightenment.[72]

Appendix

two:

Further

notes on Jihad in Sufism, the "greater striving"

By the third century A.H. the wars of conquest were all but over, and the concepts of both jihad and martyrdom began undergoing a subtle shift. Since the opportunity to die in the prosecution of God's cause was all but gone, alternate forms of martyrdom were sought, as shown by a hadith which depicts a girl seeking advice from the Prophet. She laments that her father, dying of an illness, will not be able to be a martyr in a war of conquest. Muhammad said to her "Allah Most High gave him a reward according to his intentions. What do you consider martyrdom?" "Being killed in the cause of Allah," she replied. Muhammad explained that there are other types of martyrdom "in addition to being killed in Allah's cause." He listed various forms of death by illness and accident as constituting martyrdom, as well as death while on pilgrimage, during pregnancy, or even the death of anyone who expires while in the process of fighting against his own temptations.[73]

Jihad, too, suffered shifts in meaning. It came to be seen as more an internal, spiritual struggle than a political one, and other types of sacrificial moral duties such as fasting and alms-giving came to be a preferred substitute for martyrdom.[74] Ramadan, the month of fasting, was sometimes portrayed as a period of voluntary suffering enjoined upon the community as a sort of communal sacrifice.[75] Indeed, their relation is evidenced by the fact that one fighting a jihad is excused from fasting, the only official exclusion that is not necessarily based on travel or health considerations.

The most evident of these new meanings of martyrdom was the new Sufi redefinition of jihad as comprising a greater and a lesser struggle. Sufism is not entirely peaceful and not-militant: one of its founding hero-figures, Hasan al-Basri, lived an active life largely devoted to participating in the early jihads of political conquest, and many later Sufi leaders were also militant, teaching that a true messiah must lead jihad against unbelievers.[76]

Notwithstanding, the generality of Sufis accept a modified doctrine of jihad. An oft-quoted (but weak) hadith reports that Muhammad, on returning from a military struggle, exclaimed "we have come back from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad." When asked what he meant by the "greater jihad," he answered "the jihad against oneself." [77] This and similar sentiments led the Sufis to more clearly formulate a distinction between the jihad al-nafs, the

struggle against one's lower natures, nafs (what the Bible would call "the flesh"), and the jihad bi al-sayf, "struggle by means of the sword," which is restricted to actual fighting.[78] One early Sufi, Sufyan ibn-'Uyayna, expressed

how much greater the jihad al-nafs is than the jihad bi-l-sayf by declaring jihad to have a total of ten aspects, nine of which are varieties of struggle against one's self and only one of which is a struggle against an enemy.[79]

The jihad against oneself is the struggle to subjugate one's lower natures and fortify oneself against succumbing to temptations of pleasure. It is seen as being greater because, while the jihad bi-l-sayf is against an external opponent and is by nature a short-lived struggle, the jihad al-nafs is all-encompassing and life-long. The nafs is the seat of all blameworthy qualities and sinful actions--it is what a hadith describes as "the worst enemy you have..."[80] Therefore, these Sufis taught, the struggle against this nafs becomes, not just a moral imperative, but the greatest duty a Muslim could have in the path of God.

Appendix
three:

Reuters

World News Summary headlines

The following is an informal survey of the daily news headlines of Reuters "World News Summary" webpage from Thursday, January 2, 1997 to Tuesday, February 23, 1997, taken for the purpose of charting the ratio of articles about Islam to those which specifically link Islam and offensive violence (i.e. attacks on Muslims were not counted).

Results: of the twenty-three articles which mentioned Islam, twenty were exclusively reports of Muslim military activity in which clear connections were drawn between the news-making actions and the participants' adherence to Islam. These three exceptions are underlined.

From Linkname: Reuters News Summary; World. Filename:

<http://www.yahoo.com/text/headlines/international/> All articles, and only those articles, mentioning "Islam" or "Muslim" have been included. Ellipses indicate intervening paragraphs which have been cut.

Thursday January 2 8:26 AM EST Jihad to Punish Israel for Hebron Attack

JERUSALEM (Reuter) - An Islamic militant group on Thursday vowed that Israelis would be punished for an attack by an off-duty Israeli soldier on Palestinians in the West Bank town of Hebron.

...In a statement faxed to an international news agency, the Islamic Jihad group described an emerging deal on Israeli army redeployment in Hebron as "an agreement

of shame" and said that the wounding of seven Palestinians in Wednesday's shooting would invite more atrocities against Palestinians.

Monday January 6 10:42 AM EST Tensions Rise in Muslim Village on Serb Land

SARAJEVO (Reuters) - U.N. international police on Monday reported rising tension between Serb police and Muslim residents of a northeastern village in Bosnian Serb territory who have complained of insults and night-time explosions.

The pre-war Muslim residents of Dugi Dio reoccupied their village in September, sparking a standoff with Serb authorities that ended after both sides signed a refugee return procedure and Serb police were allowed to conduct patrols.

Monday January 6 5:18 PM EST Algerian Rebels Kill 22 in Overnight Attacks

PARIS (Reuters) - Muslim guerrillas killed 18 people in an overnight attack in an Algerian village and four others in the capital Algiers just as the Algerian prime minister said his government had crushed rebel violence.

Tuesday January 7 5:40 PM EST Algeria Car Bomb Kills Seven, Wounds Dozens

PARIS (Reuters) - A huge car bomb exploded in central Algiers Tuesday afternoon, killing seven people and wounding 48, several of whom were in critical condition, security forces said in a statement.

...Algiers has been the target of numerous bomb attacks blamed by the authorities on Muslim fundamentalists. Two car bombs in Algiers late in December killed at least 18 people.

Wednesday January 8 4:07 PM EST Eight Israeli Troops Wounded in Lebanon

JERUSALEM (Reuters) - Eight Israeli soldiers were wounded Wednesday in two separate incidents in the south Lebanon border zone occupied by the Jewish state, Israeli security sources said.

Tuesday, Muslim guerrillas attacked Israeli and allied militia posts and some shells slammed into two villages in the zone, pro-Israeli militia sources said.

Tuesday January 14 8:35 AM EST Mubarak Doubts Letter Bombs Came from Egypt

CAIRO (Reuters) - Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said Tuesday he doubted letter bombs sent to London, Washington and New York came from Egypt, despite carrying Egyptian stamps and postmarks.

...The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation has described as speculation a

possible link with the Islamist groups which planted a bomb at the World Trade Center in New York in 1993 and planned to blow up the United Nations and other targets.

Wednesday January 15 5:12 PM EST PLO Warns Hamas Against Wrecking Hebron Deal

JERUSALEM (Reuter) - A top Palestinian security official threatened Wednesday to use severe measures against the militant Islamic Hamas group if it tried to wreck peace deals with Israel in Hebron and in other Palestinian-ruled areas.

...Hamas has in the past carried out suicide bombing attacks in Israel in an effort to wreck the Palestinian-Israeli peace deal initiated in talks in Oslo, Norway, four years ago.

Thursday January 16 4:54 PM EST Radical Palestinians Vow to Wreck Hebron Deal

DAMASCUS, Syria (Reuter) - Radical Palestinian guerrilla groups Thursday condemned the terms of a partial Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank town of Hebron as a crime against Palestinians and vowed to wreck the accord.

A 10-member alliance, which claimed responsibility for several suicide bombings against Israel since its peace agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993, said the new accord met all Israel's conditions. "Like the previous treacherous deals, this accord does not represent our people or reflect its will.

The alliance will continue its struggle and jihad (holy war) to foil it and the deals of capitulation and surrender," the statement said.

Friday January 17 4:24 PM EST Taleban Claim New Advances in Afghanistan

MIR BACHA KOT, Afghanistan (Reuter) - Afghanistan's Islamic Taleban militia said it had captured parts of Kapisa province, northwest of Kabul, from opposition forces on Friday.

Monday January 20 5:01 PM EST Bomb Explodes by Algerian School

PARIS, Jan 20 (Reuter) - A bomb exploded on Monday outside a school for girls in a suburb southeast of the capital Algiers, but there were no casualties and only slight material damage, residents said.

The latest blast follows a pattern of attacks against schools since 1994 when the ruthless Armed Islamic Group (GIA) warned students to stay away from schools, arguing their courses hamper the struggle to overthrow the government.

Tuesday January 21 7:21 AM EST Strike Called by Muslim Group Hits Karachi

KARACHI, Pakistan (Reuter) - A strike called by a militant Sunni Muslim group reduced commercial activity and public transport in the southern port city of Karachi on Tuesday, witnesses said.

Police and paramilitary rangers patrolled main roads in Pakistan's biggest city and guarded commercial centers and mosques to prevent any outbreak of violence.

Tuesday January 21 5:11 PM EST Bomb Rocks Algiers Commercial Center

PARIS (Reuter) - A huge bomb explosion hit Algiers's Ryad el Feth trade center Tuesday evening, less than four hours after a car bomb blast killed at least six people nearby, residents said.

...The leader of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) has warned that his Islamic rebel group will step up attacks in Algeria during the Moslem fasting month of Ramadan that started on January 10, an Algerian newspaper reported on Tuesday.

Thursday January 23 4:56 PM EST Algerian Toll Rises, Opposition Urges US Help

PARIS (Reuter) - Nearly two weeks of urban bombings and village massacres by suspected Islamist guerrillas have killed at least 170 people, Algerian newspapers said Thursday.

Thursday January 23 4:57 PM EST Afghan Taleban Breach Enemy Defenses

SALANG PASS, Afghanistan (Reuter) - Afghanistan's Islamic Taleban militia burst through opposition defenses to capture three key towns and part of the Salang Pass north of Kabul in a dawn assault Thursday, witnesses said.

Friday January 24 4:52 PM EST Algerian President Calls Killings 'Barbarous'

PARIS (Reuter) - Algerian residents said Friday suspected Muslim rebels killed 15 civilians, including 10 women, overnight, hours before President Liamine Zeroual said Algeria was being shaken by a wave of "barbarous savagery".

Thursday January 30 4:08 PM EST Tearful Algerian President Leads Mourners

PARIS (Reuter) - A retired Algerian general was killed Thursday in the western Algerian city of Oran soon after a state funeral was held in Algiers for assassinated union leader Abdelhak Benhamouda.

Algeria's security forces said in a statement retired general Habib Khelil was "assassinated by terrorists," the term used to describe Muslim guerrillas.

Feb 2, 1997 00:06 a.m. EST Bosnian Croats Block Return of Muslims

STOLAC, Bosnia-Herzegovina (Reuter) - About 200 angry Bosnian Croats throwing stones and eggs forced a group of Muslim refugees to cancel a groundbreaking return to their hometown Friday.

...Chanting "no more mosques, no more bowing prayers, no more Muslims," the Croats threw eggs at Muslim officials, U.N. aid workers, officers for the NATO-led peace force and even Croat police.

Sunday February 2 8:35 AM EST Dwarf 'Terrorist' Beheads 31 in Algeria

PARIS (Reuter) - Muslim "terrorists" killed 31 people in an Algerian town, and a dwarf hacked off their heads with an axe and knife, the usually well-informed Algerian newspaper El Watan said Sunday.

Feb 5, 1997 9:18 p.m. EST Algiers Bans Cars to Thwart Bombers

PARIS (Reuter) - Algeria on Wednesday imposed a traffic ban in the streets of its capital Algiers to try to thwart car bomb attacks blamed by the authorities on Moslem fundamentalists.

Feb 5, 1997 9:18 p.m. EST Turkish Army, Leftists Gang up on Islamists

ISTANBUL (Reuter) -- Opposition MPs and the secularist armed forces, alarmed by the ruling Islamists' radicalism, have ganged up on Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan in a show of political and military strength.

...Meanwhile, Turkey's generals stepped up their war of nerves with the government, using an anti-Islamist newspaper to caution it was straying too far from the secular path staked out 70 years ago by Kemal Ataturk, creator of the modern republic.

Monday February 10 4:15 PM EST Iran Marks Islamic Revolution Anniversary

Iran's Islamic revolution rallied in Tehran on Monday, cheering and brandishing posters of the late leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

More than 100,000 men and women in black veils marched to a rally in Tehran, chanting the trademark slogans of the 1979 revolution: "Death to America" and "Death to Israel."Iran Marks Islamic Revolution Anniversary

Monday February 10 4:17 PM EST China Puts Curfew on Muslim Town After Riot

BEIJING (Reuter) - Chinese authorities have imposed a curfew on a town in the restive northwestern Xinjiang region after at least 10 people were killed in a separatist Moslem riot last week, officials and local residents said on Monday.

At least 10 people were killed and many wounded when about 1,000 Muslim separatists of the Uighur ethnic minority rampaged through Yining last Wednesday,

smashing cars, burning shops and beating up Han Chinese to protest against Beijing rule.

Monday February 10 11:06 AM EST Algeria's Ramadan Ends with More Violence

PARIS (Reuter) - Twenty-two people, including four families, were killed in Algiers and nearby towns in weekend violence coinciding with the end of Ramadan and the feast of Eid al-Fitr, Algerian newspapers said Monday.

Algeria's Liberte newspaper said suspected Muslim guerrillas Friday killed 14 people, members of three families, in the Muslim fundamentalist stronghold of Eucalyptus on the southern edge of Algiers.

Tuesday February 25 5:10 PM EST Radical Palestinian Alliance Splits on Policy

DAMASCUS (Reuter) - A radical Palestinian alliance of 10 Islamic and secular factions opposed to the Palestinian-Israeli peace deal has split over policy, Palestinian officials said Tuesday.

They told Reuters the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) led by George Habash and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) led by Nayhef Hawatmeh were refusing to participate in meetings.

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Footnotes

1 Karen

Armstrong, *Holy War* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 18.

2 John Laffin, *Holy War* (London: Grafton Books, 1988), rear jacket.

3 Informal survey by author of the daily news of Reuters "World News Summary" webpage. Linkname "Yahoo! Reuters News Summary"; Linkname "World"; URL <http://www.yahoo.com/text/headlines/international>.

4 Peter Wallensteen and Margareta Sollenberg, "After the Cold War: Emerging Patterns of Armed Conflict 1989-94," in *Journal of Peace Research*, 32:3, 1995.

5 The five "pillars" of Islam concern individual duties, and are thus not necessarily enforced by the state. Jihad, as a collective obligation, must be initiated by the religious leader and regulated by the state. It is thus subject to a different juridical treatment: one more similar to what the West would recognize as a legalistic one than are the other religious observances. See Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1955), 57-8 and 60.

6 Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the Qur'an will taken from the revised translation of Yusuf Ali.

7 Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 20, Number 3105 (Taken from the internet. Linkname "Sunan Abu Dawud"; URL <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/abudawud>) and Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, s.v. Shahid, 516.

8 Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, s.v. Shahid, 516.

9 Another issue is that of gender in martyrdom, for in each of these three areas gender has played a different role. Regarding martyrdom in the cause of God, Muhammad is reported to have elevated death in pregnancy as a form of martyrdom [see note 73, below]; in Sufism ascetic practices often were identical for each gender; and in the contemporary jihad it has tended to become an almost exclusively male activity. [Jean-François Legrain, "Palestinian Islamisms: Patriotism as a Condition of their Expansion," in Marty and Appleby, eds., *The Fundamentalism Project*, volume IV: *Accounting for Fundamentalisms*, 413-27].

10 While mentions of war are frequent in the Qur'an, the words used are usually *harb* and *qital*. Translating jihad as "holy war" would be incorrect in this context, for the literal translation of "holy war," *harb muqaddas*, is not found in either the Qur'an or hadith. Cf. M. Amir Ali, "Jihad Explained" (Chicago: Institute of Islamic Information and Education), accessed from internet: Linkname "jihad explained"; URL <http://www.moslem.org/jihad2.htm>.

11 All instances of the verb "to strive" in these excerpts are derivations of S-L-M.

12 Further nuances of jihad include the fight against the polytheists versus the apostates versus the People of the Book; against criminals and highway robbers, against internal dissension; and against injustice within the community. Moulavi Cheragh Ali provides a full account of the derivations of JHD as they occur in the Qur'an in Moulavi Cheragh Ali, *A Critical Exposition of the Popular "Jihád"* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabigat-i Delli, 1984), 166-8, 171-92. See also Khadduri, *War and Peace*, 74-82.

13 All quotations taken from Sahih Bukhari are from the internet. Linkname "Sahih Bukhari"; URL

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/bukhari>.

14 Cf. Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), 206. See also Amir Ali, "Jihad Explained."

15 Armstrong, *Holy War*, 25, and S. Abdullah Schleifer, "Jihad and Traditional Islamic Consciousness," in *The Islamic Quarterly* (XXVII:3-4, 1983): 180.

16 See Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1994), 63, Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 12f., and John Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 95.

17 All instances of the verb "to fight" in these excerpts are derivations of the same word.

18 Also "They ask thee concerning fighting in the Prohibited Month. Say: Fighting therein is a grave offense; but graver is it in the sight of Allah... to deny Him" (2:216-217) and "But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them." (9:5)

19 Also "And if ye die or are slain in the way of Allah, forgiveness and mercy from Allah are far better than all they could amass: and if ye die, or are slain, Lo! it is unto Allah that ye are brought together," (3:157-8 [Cf. 2:153]) and "Those who leave their homes in the cause of Allah, and are then slain or die;--on them will Allah bestow verily a goodly Provision. Verily He will admit them to a place with which they shall be well pleased." (22:58-9)

20 H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, eds.; *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press; 1965); s.v. *Shahid*, 516.

21 Michael Bonner, "Ja'a'il and Holy War in Early Islam," in *Der Islam* (68, 1991), 56.

22 *Sahih Bukhari* Volume 4, Book 52, Number 53.

23 Schleifer, "Jihad," 124.

24 Cf. Fred M. Donner, "Sources of Islamic Conceptions of War," in John Kelsey and James Turner Johnson, eds., *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 49.

25 Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London: Longman, 1986), 77.

26 E.g. Harun Saddiqi, "The Meaning of Suffering in Islam," in a lecture delivered at the University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, on Tuesday, February 11, 1997.

27 Johanna McGeary and Eric Silver, "Killing for God," in *TIME* (December 4, 1995), 50.

28 Cf. Esposito, *Islam*, 127f.

29 I.e., newly-conservative and militant. See Martin E. Marty and R.

Scott Appleby, *The Fundamentalism Project*, volume I: *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), vii-x, for a discussion of the general use and application of this term, and John E. Voll, "Fundamentalism in the Sunni Arab World: Egypt and the Sudan," in *ibid.*, 347, for a discussion of the term applied to Islam.

30 Religion, Contingency, and Violence: Cases from Islam, by Peter G. Mandaville. Accessed from the Internet: Linkname none; URL <http://snipe.ukc.ac.uk/international/dissert.dir/pehgehmast.html>.

31 See Voll, "Fundamentalism," 376ff., and Raphael Patai, "The Sinister West," in *The Arab Mind* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983), 290-5.

32 Esposito, *Islam*, 169-71.

33 Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, 119f.

34 Voll, "Fundamentalism," 345f.

35 Quoted in John Kelsay and James Turner Johnson, *Just War and Jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on War and Peace in Western and Islamic Traditions* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 149f.

36 Michael M. J. Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 204 and 214.

37 Portrayed in "Jihad in America," television program aired on the American Public Broadcasting Service Sept. 21, 1994. Quoted here from the internet. Linkname "Urban terrorism in the name of Islam"; URL <http://www.twibp.com/archives/17/1.html>.

38 These five examples of martyrdom terrorism--though I cite no specific instances and though similar examples are often portrayed as fiction in media such as Hollywood "action" movies--are not fictional. See John Laffin, *Holy War*; McGeary and Silver, "Killing for God"; Br. Abu Ruqaiyah, "The Islamic Legitimacy of The 'Martyrdom Operations,'" Br. Hussein El-Chamy, trans., *Nida'ul Islam* magazine, vol. 16 (Dec.- Jan. 1996-97) (<http://www.speednet.com.au/~nida>).

39 Quoted in Amatzia Baram, "Two Roads to Revolutionary Shi'ite Fundamentalism," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *The Fundamentalism Project*, volume IV: *Accounting for Fundamentalisms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 558. The motivations behind martyrdom in jihad differ between Sunnis and Shi'is. While the modern Sunni extremists are inspired by the justifications listed above (the martyr's reward, reaction to secularization and Zionism, etc.), the Shi'is are further motivated by the model of the death of the third Imam Husayn. This aspect of Shi'ism will be addressed below; the difference is not relevant for our purposes here.

40 Baram, "Two Roads," 561f.

41 Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985), figure 39, and David Pinault, *The Shiites* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), figure 5, are reproductions of such billboards.

42 E.F. Porter, "History soaked in blood; hatred, savage fighting

have marked Moscow's involvement in Chechnya for close to 400 years," in St. Louis Post-Dispatch (January 29, 1995), p. 1B.

43 Internet: Linkname Chechnya Headlines; URL http://www.ummah.org.uk/haqqani/Islam/Shariah/muamalaat/jihad/chechen_news.html. One of the principle directories of this site, at Linkname: Table of Contents; URL: <http://www.best.com/~informe/haqqani/Sufi/toc.html>, offers a full menu of jihad-related definitions, histories, and links.

44 Internet: Linkname none; URL http://www.ummah.org.uk/haqqani/Sufi/chechen_jihad.html.

45 From the Association for Supporting the Islamic Resistance, accessed from the internet, Linkname Islamic Resistace [sic]; URL <http://www.moqawama.org/home2.htm>.

46 Hans Wehr, J. M. Cowan, ed., Arabic-English Dictionary (New York: Spoken Language Services, 1976)

47 Bowersock, Martyrdom and Rome, 19.

48 Quoted in Reinhold Loeffler, Islam in Practice: Religious Beliefs in a Persian Village (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 230.

49 Rima Termos, "Lebanon: Martyrs Line Up for Honor of Dying for God." Beirut, Dec. 13 (IPS)

50 See Legrain, "Palestinian Islamisms," 413-27.

51 Termos, "Lebanon: Martyrs Line Up," and Internet, Linkname Chechnya Headlines.

52 Ruqaiyah, "The Islamic Legitimacy."

53 Quoted in Termos, "Lebanon: Martyrs Line Up."

54 Quoted in Termos, "Lebanon: Martyrs Line Up."

55 Khadduri, War and Peace, 62.

56 Encyclopedia of Religion, s.v. "martyrdom."

57 Khadduri, War and Peace, 70.

58 Examples of this public, motivational aspect of martyrdom are so numerous in Islam that selecting only a few to cite would be misleading.

59 I am indebted to Ruth Mas for pointing out the unique nature of charisma in Islam.

60 Quoted in Ninian Smart, The Philosophy of Religion (New York: Random House, 1970), 17.

61 Karen Armstrong, A History of God (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 272-3.

62 Rig Veda, book X, chapter 90. Barbara C. Sproul, Primal Myths: Creating the World (San Francisco: Harper, 1979), pp. 180f.

63 See Sproul, Primal Myths, 157-66.

64 The Enuma elish, tablets four through six. Trans. E. A. Speiser, in James B. Pritchard, ed., The Ancient Near East: Volume 1: an Anthology of Texts and Pictures (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 31-37.

65 See J. G. Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, abridged edition (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), 379,

427-37, 455, 456-62, 802-12, and elsewhere.

66 Geoffrey Parrinder, ed., *The World's Religions: From Ancient History to the Present* (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1983), 72-77, 81-87.

67 See Jonah Siegel [Winters], *Thinking in Buddhism: Nagarjuna's Middle Way* (Bachelor's Thesis: Reed College, 1994), 62-67, 173.

68 Slightly paraphrased from Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East*, 191. The text's meaning appears to be that the dead bodies were so thickly clustered on the battlefield that not even souls could slip through.

69 Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 293-95. See also W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (New York: University Press, 1965), 22-57.

70 See G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

71 *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1970, s.v. "martyr."

72 See, for example, William James' collection of primary documents on Christian asceticism and his commentary on them in William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: The Modern Library 1902), 286-307.

73 Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 20, Number 3105 (Taken from the internet.

Linkname "Sunan Abu Dawud"; URL

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/abudawud>) and Shorter *Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. Shahid, 516.

74 Shorter *Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. Shahid, 516.

75 Saddiqi, "Suffering in Islam."

76 Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 110, 284-5.

77 Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, 118.

78 Peters, *Islam and Colonialism*, 120.

79 W. Montgomery Watt, "Islamic Conceptions of the Holy War," in Thomas Patrick Murphy, ed., *The Holy War* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 1976), 155.

80 Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 112.

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