

Palestinian Refugees and Resistance: Martyrdom Operations (Al-Amaliyat Al-Istishhadiya) as a Model*

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Abstract

The study aimed to identify martyrdom operations (Al-Amaliyat Al-Istishhadiya) as a model of Palestinian refugees' resistance. Findings revealed that martyrdom operations have been developed within the framework of the Palestinian resistance to shake off the "Israeli" occupation. Accordingly, Palestinians' resistance of the occupation is considered a natural response. Since 1948, Palestinians have been exposed to most brutal forms of annihilation, persecution and occupation; they resorted to resistance and martyrdom operations in order to liberate their country from occupation and to defend themselves and their rights and dignity. Palestinian refugee suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) choose the approach of martyrdom operations in order to practice their right of return, self-determination, sovereignty and independence based on the UN Charter and the rest of international covenants and conventions, principles of international law and international legitimacy resolutions. The expulsion of Palestinian refugees has turned into a factor of strength for the Palestinian people in the struggle against occupation. Palestinian refugees are more determined to resist until they return to their original villages, towns, and cities.

Keywords

Palestinian Refugees, Nakba, Resistance, Martyrdom Operations, Al-Amaliyat Al-Istishhadiya

*We have to defend our blessed land against the occupiers with the last drop of blood in our veins. We will fight them until Jaffa, Haifa and Ashkelon return.

The Palestinian refugee suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mahmoud Salem, Ashdod dual operation, 14 March 2004.

1. Introduction

The Palestinian experience under “Israeli” occupation was and still is the most tragic one in terms of the victims and violence that were left behind as a result of acts of killing, injury, handicap, physical and psychological torture as a result of house demolition, confiscation of lands and water, arrests, raids, pursuits and other forms of violence. Palestinians have always faced the most brutal occupier that history has ever known (Banat, 2010, 2014).

It is certain that Palestinians did not choose this battle; they wished that they were like the rest of the peoples of the world paying attention to the development of their independent state and fulfilling their political, economic and social aspirations. However, they were forced to live with the “Israeli” occupier who brought destruction and hatred to this region of the world more than a century ago.

Up until 1948, Palestinians lived in peace on their land. But on 15 May 1948, the Zionist movement confirmed the formation of the “nascent state of Israel” and annexed 78% of Palestinian land. The immediate result was that Palestinians were displaced from twenty cities and about four hundred villages, with some seven-hundred-thousand Palestinians becoming homeless, equivalent to 66% of the inhabitants of Palestine (Banat, 2010; Banat et al., 2018).

The disintegration of Palestinian society, in all respects, followed and a new phenomenon appeared in the Palestinian society “Palestinian refugee camps”. Seventy years later, more than seven million Palestinians are still living in exile, mostly in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, but also elsewhere in the world (Allan, 2007; Chatty & Hundt, 2005; Masalha, 2009; Banat, 2014).

In human history, there is no crime as brutal as the one of Zionist gangsters forcing Palestinians out of their lands in 1948; this was later called the Palestinian Nakba (Sanbar, 2001).

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

This resistance evolved over sixty years of struggle and each utilized different techniques and methods till another mode of Palestinian resistance would emerge. In the first half of the nineteen nineties, a technique called the “Al-Amaliyat Al-Istishhadiya” [Martyrdom Operations] evolved. At the beginning, these operations used to be individualistic and soon they increased. The most noticeable was the commencement of the Al-Aqsa Intifada (September 2000) which became a general phenomenon that spread amongst the different sectors, groups, youth and social classes of the Palestinian people (Banat, 2010).

The Palestinian resistance factions were able to implement two hundred qualitative martyrdom operations during the period of 1993-2008. They utilized explo-

sive, inter alia, cars, belts and bags that rocked “Israel” and raised a large scale wave of reaction both locally and internationally. This action constituted a turning point in the history of the “Israeli”-Palestinian conflict. The Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) is a rare phenomenon unfounded in any other part of the world. This form of resistance has become exemplary among liberation movements throughout the world.

2. Background and Literature Review

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

In 1897, Durkheim was the first to propose that spiritual commitment may contribute to emotional well-being, as it provides a source of meaning and order in the world (Durkheim, 1951; Taylor, 1982). Durkheim suggested that the wide differences in suicide rates across countries are probably explained at least in part by cultural and religious differences (Grimland et al., 2006). He identified three types of suicide characterized by the integration of an individual into the society. The most germane is the altruistic suicide which martyrdom in Islam is classified and its definition is, “sacrifice of life to serve non individual sublime objectives”.

According to Durkheim (1951) classification, altruistic suicide may occur when a person becomes deeply integrated into a social group, and as such, it becomes a duty for the members of that group. In this regard, the father of the Palestinian female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Ayat AlAkhras, Jerusalem operation on 29th March 2002 said, “It has become a duty to resist the occupation, and each person resists the occupation in his own way. You may resist with bullets, with words, by art, or martyrdom operations.”

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

It is important to separate the western concept of suicide from the Islamic con-

cept martyrdom. The focus is on martyrdom, which involves using ones' death as a defense of ones' homeland by inflicting losses on an enemy, rather than on suicide which is a self-inflicted intentional act designed to end one's own life (Mustafa, 2003b; Sawahil, 2003; Abdel-Khalek, 2004; Gearing & Lizardi, 2008).

The naming of the Palestinian martyrdom operations as suicidal is a misleading misnomer; they are heroic martyrdom operations which are far from being suicidal. Those who carry them out are far from being victims to the psychology of the suicide in the western concept which is a person who kills himself for the sake of himself only. The suicide martyr "Istishhady" presents his life as a sacrifice for the sake of his religion, homeland and nation and resists legitimately those who occupied his land, usurped his right and are still practicing all sorts of systematic aggression against all the members of the Palestinian people (Banat, 2010).

Nonetheless, it should be clear that Islam strictly forbids suicide in the western concept (Dabbagh, 2005). In the Holy Quran, suicide is expressly forbidden, God Almighty said, "O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities: but let there be amongst you traffic and trade by mutual good-will, nor kill (or destroy) yourselves: for verily Allah hath been to you Most Merciful! If any do that in rancour and injustice, soon shall we cast them into the fire: and easy it is for Allah" (Al-Nesaa: 29-30).

In this context, Abdel-Khalek (2004) cites research which indicates higher significance than the Western samples on measures of psychological disorder, such as depression, which usually serve as predictors of suicide. He writes that a true Muslim believes that he is the servant of Allah, the Creator and the Provider who determines the life span of his creatures; a Muslim is not free to end his life whenever he wants, and by killing oneself or another he is doomed to great punishment.

Moreover, Islam considers the killer of one single person as the killer of all people, as if he killed all mankind. He adds that Islam is not a religion of submission or of oppressed human beings and the Palestinian soil has become fertile ground for the growing phenomenon of martyrdom. This has given rise to a culture of resistance, since they have a deep feeling of injustice and humiliation after being chased out of their own country and conquered by Israelis. All of these are caused as a result of what the Israeli army has done against the Palestinians by killing and imprisoning, then burying prisoners of war alive, using arrested people as human spare parts for wounded Israelis, demolishing more than 17,000 houses, and bulldozing farm lands (Abdel-Khalek, 2004; Banat, 2010).

The Istishhady (Suicide Martyr) holds the duty of defending man and homeland; he prepares himself for martyrdom since it needs a special preparation. It only takes place through practical suffering and abandonment of all pleasures and lusts along with real patience and anguish. Following the psychological choices and looking towards God for peace and stability of the mind, the martyr possesses luminary force made of righteousness (Aliq, 2004). In the same context, Baghdadi (1993) writes that the martyrdom operation is a defensive one based on lifting injustice and getting rid of the oppressors; it is a sublime human end which seeks

to return stolen rights; it is an honest principle for the support of the exaltedness of the Islamic principles and values.

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

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

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

In an opinion poll conducted by the Development Studies Center in BirZeit University in the period 24-26/7/2003 (BirZeit University, 2003) through a sample of 1200 Palestinian citizens in the West Bank and Gaza Strip three years after the Al-Aqsa Intifada, 44.3% stressed that martyrdom operations inside Israeli cities had led to very positive results for the Palestinian question; 32.5% opposed this; 17.6% stressed that these operations did not have a positive or negative effect on the Palestinian question while 5.6% abstained and did not give their opinion regarding this topic. The majority of 53.3% supported the halt of martyrdom operations if Israel stopped all forms of violence against Palestinians. In another poll carried out by the Opinion Polls and Surveys Studies Center at AnNajah National University in the period 22-24/12/2007 (AnNajah National University, 2007) on a sample of 1360 male and female citizens of which 860 were from the West Bank and 500 from Gaza Strip in the age group 18 years and above, findings showed

that 56.6% of the sample supported martyrdom operations in Israeli cities; 37.4% opposed it while 6% did not give an opinion.

3. Aims and Scope

In human history, there is no crime as brutal as the one of Zionist gangsters forcing Palestinians out of their lands in 1948; this was later called the Palestinian Nakba (Catastrophe). That year, a country and its people disappeared from the map of the world, and Palestinians suffered traumatic experiences have become firm and cannot be erased from their collective memory (Sanbar, 2001).

Since the beginning of the “Israeli”-Palestinian conflict, the Palestinian people have always been fighting and resisting. This resistance has developed over sixty years of struggle, and has ended up with different techniques and methods until a new model of Palestinian resistance emerged in the first half of the nineties called martyrdom operations (Al-Amaliyat Al-Istishhadiya).

The study sheds the light on the Palestinian refugees’ resistance in general and through the martyrdom operations (Al-Amaliyat Al-Istishhadiya) in particular, since the Palestinian refugees witnessed the birth of the Palestinian resistance factions, and the struggle then began, as youthful refugees began their struggle against the occupiers, believing that resistance is the only way for their families to return to their homeland. Here, it is worth noting that the majority of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) were refugees (Banat, 2010). This point is supported by an admonition to the Palestinian people that the refugee suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mahmoud Salem, Ashdod operation, 14 March 2004, included in his will, “We have to defend our blessed land against the occupiers with the last drop of blood in our veins. We will fight them until Jaffa, Haifa and Ashkelon return.”

4. Definition of Terms

4.1. Nakba (Catastrophe, Disaster)

This occurred when more than 900,000 Palestinian people—about half of prewar Palestine’s Arab population—fled or were expelled from their homes during the 1948 Palestine war (Abu Sitteh, 1997; Banat, 2002; Masri, 2008).

4.2. Palestinian Refugee

Refugee is any Palestinian expelled from his natural place of residence in Palestine for the year 1948, later or departed from it for any reason but “Israel” did not permit him/her to return to his/her original home. Palestinian refugees are distributed into 59 official camps; 19 are in the West Bank, 8 in Gaza Strip, 10 in Jordan, 10 in Syria in addition to 12 in Lebanon; the rest are in the Arab Diaspora in the Arab countries outside camps and in the international Diaspora i.e. outside the limits of the Arab World in the two Americas, Australia and other countries; it is estimated that the number of Palestinian refugees today is more than five million (Banat, 2002).

4.3. Suicide Martyr (Istishhady)

It is a Palestinian term with religious and popular significances given to the person who with premeditation and full consciousness, fitted an explosive belt on his body, carried an explosive satchel bag, or drove a suicide car bomb in order to cause a blast and blow up the enemy without even having the chance of coming out alive. It is important to separate the western concept of "Suicide" from the Islamic concept "Martyrdom". The focus is on martyrdom, which involves using one's death in defense of ones' homeland by inflicting losses on an enemy, not on suicide which is the self-inflicted intentional act designed to end one's own life (Mustafa, 2003b; Sawahil, 2003; Abdel-Khalek, 2004; Gearing & Lizardi, 2008).

4.4. Martyrdom Operations (Al-Amaliyat Al-Istishhadiya)

It is an individual operation and not military in a conventional sense, whereby both the enemy and the executor of the operation are destroyed (Odeh & Jum'ah, 2002).

5. Limitations

The study was limited to the Palestinian refugee suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) who sacrificed themselves for different motives, and from different Palestinian factions with premeditation and full knowledge. They carried out a martyrdom operation in which they knew that they would not come out of it alive, using an explosive belt, an explosive bag, or an explosive car in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the period of 1993-2008.

6. Methodology and Design

The current study is a qualitative in nature, as both the interview, and content analysis methods have been used to explore the Palestinian refugees and resistance through martyrdom operations (Al-Amaliyat Al-Istishhadiya) as a model. These tools are appropriate for use in this research study, given the exploratory nature of the topic. Data were collected from the field interviews with the families, relatives, and close friends of the sampled population, with the cooperation of the Foundation Care/Families of Martyrs & Wounded in Palestine.

7. Palestinian Refugees

The Palestinian camp does not basically involve the structure of the Palestinian society since it's a foreign and urgent body to the social structure and the cultural and political systems of the Palestinian society. The camp is an expression that represents the urgent Palestinian concentrations through compulsory Diaspora which the Palestinian 1948 and post 1967 war were exposed to. The Palestinian Diaspora was the social, economic and cultural condition of place and time resulting from the immigration of more than one million Palestinians from their Palestinian cities, villages and Bedouins sites. Based on this incident, which was later called Nakba, the terms of Diaspora in sociology entered into the dictionary of the

Palestinian life and formulated it in its present condition.

The refugee is any Palestinian expelled from his natural place of residence in Palestine for the year 1948, later or departed from it for any reason but “Israel” did not permit him/her to return to his/her original home. Palestinian refugees are distributed into 59 official camps; 19 are in the West Bank, 8 in Gaza Strip, 10 Jordan, 10 in Syria in addition to 12 in Lebanon; the rest are in the Arab Diaspora in the Arab countries outside camps and in the international Diaspora i.e. outside the limits of the Arab World in the two Americas, Australia and other countries; it is estimated that the number of Palestinian refugees today is more than six million (Ahmad, 2022: p. 56).

Palestinian Refugees constitute 47.9% of the total population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, accounting for a total of 2,159,015 refugees (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics-PCBS, 2017).

“Israel” has completely disregarded the UN Resolution 194, which demanded that Palestinian refugees return to their homeland. All their attempts to return have failed; this led to the creation of a new stage, a Palestinian diaspora, which endeavors to grant Palestinians liberation to return after seventy-seven years of the Nakba (UN, 1948; Abu Sitta, 2001; Banat, 2014; Ahmad, 2022).

In 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) founded Palestinian camps. Since their establishment, the camps have been monitored and supervised by the UNRWA. It seeks to fulfill the residents’ basic needs for health or education and in kind as feasible. The majority of the camp residents live in small-sized houses that do not exceed 50 square meters with two to three rooms per family. These houses officially belong to the UNRWA. These camps are densely populated because of the ever-increasing number of newborns (Banat, 2002, 2010, Dayyeh & Banat, 2019; Ahmad, 2022).

The majority of the camp residents work outside the camp, and this constitutes a basic source of income after they were displaced leaving their main source of income in 1948. As for the administration of the camp, it is under the supervision of the UNRWA which appoints a director to the camp who carries a refugee card. The director is responsible for running the affairs of the camp like distribution of allowances, aids, registration of new born babies, supervision of the different facilities in the camp like schools, clinics and centers (Budairi et al., 1990).

As for the infrastructure of the camps, there are water and electricity networks; the sewerage network was recently connected to different parts of the camp. There is also a telephone network inside the camp but it does not cover all the areas inside it. There are a number of centers and facilities which offer services to the residents and meet their essential needs. In the camp, there are two schools, one for boys and the other for girls; both are for the preparatory stage. There are also mosques in the camp, kindergartens, UNRWA clinic. Warm and close social relationships are spread in the camp and they are based on love, cooperation and common target of the camp residents and the entire Palestinian people. This was reinforced due to the experience of different persecution conditions since 1948

and the existence of a high rate of intellectuals in the camp who hold different academic degrees in different specializations. There is distinguished young leadership who considers the interest of the camp in particular and the homeland in general as their first priority. Since the Palestinian Nakba until this present day, the sons of the camps are still holding the torch of national struggle following the path of their fathers and forefathers until the liberation of the entire soil of the homeland and their return to the land they used to live in prior to the year 1948. The culmination of this national struggle of the camp residents was in the fall of several martyrs and suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) from all national and Islamic factions and organizations (Budairi et al., 1990; Banat, 2002; Ahmad, 2022).

The Diaspora experience had unforgettable impacts on the Palestinian social structure as follows:

1) Immigration and humiliation: There was a loss of land and source of income; there is cold and scarcity of food; search for relatives; grief over martyrs; living in camps or in the open; charities from others and their pathetic looks. All of these along with other accompanying experiences had shocking experiences that are inerasable. A wound that would never heal; they will be passed from one generation to another until they return (Banat, 2002, 2010).

2) The special peasant make up and the Bedouin (nomad) and city in general according to its environmental and cultural formation came from the land; thus, displacement and uprooting has become fatal, loss or burial; if it were not for the family bonds, Islamic religious values which call for patience and supplication to God since He is the source of conciliation to what the Palestinians were able to bear the dissolution of the self and deterioration of the structure, humiliation, and cruelty they were exposed to (Sayegh, 1983).

3) Palestinians resorted to education and stronger family bonds; they have also sought to regain their peasant experience, so they designed the camp in the shape of a village that they were forced to leave whether in terms of construction or social structure; however, a number of changes have taken place like: change in the class structure in the ranks and roles and the social status, social isolation, family disintegration, and "Israeli" political persecution. All of this had the largest role in the outbreak of mechanisms of resistance, self-defense, sacrifice, value of martyrdom, martyrs and struggle for the regain of land, honor and dignity (Banat, 2002, 2010).

In spite of the uproot and quick change in the structure of the Palestinian society, it remained a united society from the social aspect in terms of its economic, cultural, social and political systems within the frame of a structural image of the society along with leaving the village in the form of a spiritual eagerness and homesickness which fills the souls, the hearts and behaviors of every Palestinian member and family. This has helped in the rise of the resistance in all its military, political, social and intellectual forms.

Indeed, these camps bear witness to the catastrophic results of the homelessness caused by uprooting Palestinians from their homeland. Their ongoing daily suf-

fering is seen at all levels: cultural, social, economic and political. They continue their wait for a political agreement that will put an end to their daily pain and suffering, which was promised to them by the international community, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 194 (III), which states: "Refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors' should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date" (UN, 1948; Sayegh, 1983; Kana'na, 2000; Hussien, 2003; Allan, 2007; Banat et al., 2018).

8. Stories of Palestinian Refugee Suicide Martyrs (Istishhadiyin)

A content analysis of the motivations, stories, and wills of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) confirmed that, the majority of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) were refugees, and had parents or grandparents who left their homes in the Nakba 1948.

In order to know more about the motives for martyrdom operations in the Palestinian society, particularly the uprooted of the Palestinians from their villages, homes, and lands in the year 1948, in addition to the human aspect that relates to influence of martyrs processions and daily witness of the occupation crimes destroying homes with their residents inside, killing children, women and the elderly, assassinating leaders, uprooting trees ...etc., it is essential to mention some of the stories of the Palestinian refugee suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) which collected from the field interviews with the families, relatives, and close friends of the sampled population, and the content analysis of the wills of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin).

On 13 September 1993, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Bahaa Najjar stood before the television screens which broadcasted the signing ceremony of the Oslo Accords in the White House Garden; he was looking at the live coverage with his feet shaking; he felt that his soul was about to jump out of his chest in protest and anger. He understood the weak conspiracies against our people and cause. He remembered the massive popular marches which took to the streets in his Shati Camp in refusal of the surrender conferences starting from Madrid Conference and ending with Oslo Accords. He remembered the old pictures of the past with all its anguish and agony. He remembered the homelessness and displacement of the refugees; he remembered every corner and alley in the camp. He remembered the blood of the martyr Ahmed Subih who passed away while he was carrying him of gun shots fired at him by the occupation forces. Next day 14 September 1993 following the signing of Oslo Accords, he executed a martyrdom operation in Abbas Police Station in Gaza Strip where "Israeli" occupation forces were stationed; his body was the first practical response to the state of humiliation and degradation that befell on the Palestinian cause on the steps of a new world system.

Since the martyrdom of his friend Ali Imawi, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Hisham Hamad, Netzarim operation in Gaza Strip on 11 November 1994 was considered a martyr walking on the ground. Addressing his people, he

wrote, “No peace with the sons of monkeys and pigs the enemies of Islam and no reconciliation with the Jews the killers of prophets; we the sons of the Great Islam have to rise up to the occasion and stop this cancerous disease which is called ‘Israel’ since its elimination is emphasized by the Quran. God has guaranteed victory to us only if we did not fail, weaken or falter. The battle is imposed on everybody so do not stand in the lines of humiliation looking towards the horizons of tomorrow.”

On the day of the martyrdom of his camp resident the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ayman Radi, executor of Jerusalem operation on 25 December 1994, Ramiz Obaid who was known since childhood as an artist decorated the walls of Khan Yunis camp in Gaza Strip with slogans and paintings of an “Israeli” bus shattered into pieces and bodies scattered in it everywhere. His family still remembers when one of the foreign journalists interfered and asked him whether he was just painting for the sake of painting or was it the sensation and wishes he feels for this thing to happen. Ramiz answered that he wished to become a Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) every day and night and he would call on God to bestow this blessing upon him. In deed martyrdom was living in his feelings and sensations; it reflected itself in his positions and behaviors. On the fourth of March 1996, Ramiz succeeded in reaching inside Tel Aviv and wearing a belt with more than fifteen kilograms of explosives; he blow up his body among crowds of settlers rocking all parts of Tel Aviv to remind the Zionist entity that the retaliation oath he took and announced with his hand on the walls of the camp that the blood of his martyr friend Ayman and the blood of the martyr of Palestine and the nation Dr. Fathi Shaqaqi the general secretary of the Islamic Jihad Movement is long lasting oath against the “Israeli” aggression on the lands of Palestine and holy places.

The dual martyrdom operation implemented by Salah Shaker and Anwar Sukar on 22 January 1995 in Netanya city constituted a new tactic in the implementation of martyrdom operations through following the tactic of dual attack against “Israelis”. The martyrdom was the big dream of Salah that grow up with him day by day as he sees the “Israeli” hatred pouring on the heads of his people since no house in Rafah Camp is left without scarifying a martyr, a wounded or a detainee. His own home had its share from this; he witnessed the “Israeli” army arresting his brother the engineer Ahmed in order to spend three years in prison; on another occasion he saw how the army arrested his brother the doctor Mahmoud to spend a year and a half in prison; he himself was not spared from arrest or injury. God’s will choose that Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Salah was on the day of the Al-Aqsa Massacre on 8 October 1990 passing his training period at Maqassed Hospital in Jerusalem to take part in offering first aid to the wounded of the massacre just to see in his own eyes the brutality and new crimes in the history of his people. These incidents grow in him the motive to be a martyr to get revenge for all the tortured of his people and to draw a little smile on the faces of the wounded and misfortunate. He would say, “The only path to the one who

seeks immortality is Martyrdom; I do say to those who fell behind and did not seek to become martyrs if I and you did not make a sacrifice who would?"

On the morning of 2 November 1995, Palestine was on a date of joy for the retaliation for the blood of Dr. Fathi Shaqaqi the general secretary of the Islamic Jihad Movement who was assassinated by the "Israeli" Mossad in Malta on 26 October 1995 with a dual qualitative martyrdom operation carried out by the two Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) Mohammed Abu Hashim and Ribhi Al-Kahlut when each one of them blew himself up in an "Israeli" convoy of cars in Gush Katif settlement in the heart of the Gaza Strip.

The assassination of the engineer of martyrdom operations Yahya Ayyash on 5 January 1996 had led to raging Palestinian responses ranging from denunciation, condemnation and conviction. People took to the streets in marches, festivals and demonstrations calling for revenge. Some preferred to express their protest in a different way translated in response to the assassination with an operation in the heart of the "Israeli" entity and blew themselves up on one of the crowded buses. At the time when thousands of women, children and youth were wiping tears of anger over the assassination of Yahya Ayyash, engineer Hasan Salameh the son of Gaza was wiping his sweaty forehead as he was completing the preparation and setting up of the two explosive belts worn by the Palestinian refugee suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) Ibrahim Sarahneh and Majdi Abu Warda in the dual martyrdom operation on 25 February 1996 in Ashkelon and Jerusalem. This was the first counter attack in revenge for the assassination of Ayyash. Regarding the two Palestinian refugee suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) from the inhabitants of Fawwar refugees camp, the hopes to return to the place of origin "Ajjur" and "Iraq Mansheya" inside the Green line (1948) were never lost from their minds and their families'; this was a sufficient motive for them to lead the path of resistance by themselves to regain their stolen lands and to revenge from this tyrant enemy which made their families and people homeless and settled in their lands. The second response, done by the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Raed Shagh-nobi, son of Burqa, north of Nablus city to execute Jerusalem operation on 3 March 1996. As for the third response, it was executed by the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ramiz Obaid in a qualitative martyrdom operation on 4 March 1996 in Tel Aviv.

The eyes of the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Suliman Tahayna were often disturbed by the frequent knocking of the "Israeli" soldiers at their door once in pursuit of his wanted brother Salih, another to arrest him; another the absence of his brother whom he loved and loved his path in prison. Then the philosophy of cowardliness of the occupation forces becomes clear following the brutal assassination of his brother Salih; he then swears to revenge for his brother; why not and he sees every day the crimes of the occupier who kills, wounds and arrests his brothers and friends; he sees the culmination of this aggression on his own body when they fired at him and this resulted in the amputation of his right leg. He lived the rest of his life with a plastic leg. All of this made him more deter-

mined and insistent to implement the dual Jerusalem operation with his mate Yousef Izghir on 5 November 1998.

His eyes were opened on the tragedy of his people and the homeless families between the camps of grief, homelessness, loss, starvation and pain. The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Hashim Najjar was born from the womb of suffering which his parents underwent as a result of the journey of homelessness from his village Falouja in the year 1948. The picture of this village was vividly painted in his imagination; it has created in him the determination and affirmation on revenge and retaliation for his people from the crowds of "Israelis" in Beit Shean (Bisan) operation on 22 December 2000. This is what he had expressed prior to his martyrdom; he wrote in his will, "The way to Palestine and the Aqsa does not pass through Oslo, Washington or the round tables of negotiations but through jihad (holy war), resistance, bodies, blood and tears."

The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mohammed Hbaishe Nahariyya operation on 9 September 2001 expressed his motive for martyrdom in his will by saying, "Ever since I was born and raised on this earth, I have always seen and heard about massacres one after the other against our disarmed people at the hands of the usurping Jews; I am honored by God to be one of the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) of the Al-Qassam Brigades and to hold the banner of Jihad and resistance. I pray to God to accept my martyrdom for His sake; let it be a message of revenge for the blood of the martyrs of Kufr Qasim, Deir Yassin, Qibiya, Sabra, Shatella, Qana, Al-Aqsa, Abraham Mosque and Nahaleen massacres. It is also for those whose houses were demolished in Rafah and Khan Yunis and other areas in Palestine and to revenge for the martyrs who fell in Sakhnin, Araba, Nazareth and all the martyrs who fell in the occupied Palestine of 1948 and the martyrs of Gaza Strip and the West Bank."

In spite of his high marks, since he was one of the first ten students to receive the highest average on the secondary school (Tawjihi) in Khan Yunis city which qualified him to enroll at the Engineering Faculty at the Islamic University, he refused any other certificate but to win the certificate of excellence entitled, "Istishhad" (Martyrdom) according to his mother's words. The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Abdel-Muti Assar was one of the executors of the dual operation of Erez checkpoint in Gaza Strip on 29 May 2001 with his partner the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ismail Ashour. They could not stand the injustice and contentiousness of the occupation forces; they insisted on making their bodies a fuel to burn the enemies and a light that illuminates the path for their fellow fighters who hold their weapons after them as it was stated in their wills.

Nor the borders or the geographical distance prevented the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Said Al-Hutari who lived the suffering of his people in the Diaspora. He came from Jordan to Qalqilya city north of the West Bank and executed Tel Aviv qualitative operation on 1 June 2001 in retaliation for the daily crimes of the occupation against the Palestinian people. Addressing the Palestinian people, he wrote, "You captives, you wounded, you martyrs, you widows, on

your behalf all, I offer my soul for the sake of God the Almighty and revenge for your agonies, pains and wounds. I will make from my body splinters and bombs that will hunt Bani Zion blow them up and burn their remains and please the believers by this action.”

The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ashraf Saed was as usual in his work place selling cocktail drinks in the heart of Nablus city when one of the brothers came to him in a hurry and out of breath explaining to him the details of the explosion that rocked Nablus. It was the “Israeli” assassination of the two leaders Jamal Mansour and Jamal Salim from Hamas Movement. The effect of the news on Ashraf was like a rock that fell on his chest just like the shell which the “Israelis” fired from an Apache fighter on their office. It led to their death and six others including the two children Hilal and Bilal Khudeir. The scene of the flesh pieces of the martyrs was horrible and the crowds only managed to salvage pieces of flesh; the fire inside Ashraf was only wiped out by blowing up his body among “Israelis”; he was the first one to retaliate for the assassination of the two leaders when he implemented an operation on Hamra checkpoint near Nablus on 8 August 2001.

Hamas Movement and its military wing Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades did not let the crime of assassination of the leader Mahmoud Abu Hnud and his companions in Nablus to pass by unheeded. It took upon itself to revenge for their pure blood in every place where the “Israeli” enemy is found. Its rocking reprisal was when the body of the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Taysir Ajrami from Jabaliya camp was a human bomb that exploded in the face of “Israelis” on 6 November 2001 at Erez checkpoint in Gaza Strip. It is the place where thousands of Palestinian labors were exposed to humiliation everyday on their way to work inside the occupied Palestine in 1948.

As for the first Palestinian female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Wafa Idris from Amari refugee camp, executor of Jerusalem operation on 27 January 2002, she was working with the emergency services team at the Palestinian Red Crescent Society; she saw everyday tens of wounded Palestinians and carried bodies of martyrs who were killed by occupation soldiers. She always talked about the nature of these harmful scenes. On several occasions, she came home full of sadness as she narrated stories about the injured and the martyrs whose heads and bodies were blown up by the bullets and shells of the occupation; this had a growing influence on her pushing her to carry out a martyrdom operation according to what her brother Khalil said. The latest was two weeks before her martyrdom operation; she cradled a 15 years old boy, Samir Kosbeh, who was hit in the head by a bullet fired by the “Israeli” soldiers. The clash took place just outside the West Bank headquarters of the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat. The boy lapsed into a coma for a week, and then died, two days before Idris detonated her martyrdom operation.

In very touching words expressive of a high academic level, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) university student Fouad Al-Hourani, Jerusalem opera-

tion on 9 March 2002 wrote, “The nation that masters the death industry is unbeatable; how will the right have men stand by it if we really do not stand for it. A believer without valor is like a fruitless tree, so the appeal of this earth is temporary compared to that of Paradise.”

The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Akram Nabtiti, Jerusalem operation on 17 March 2002 wrote in his will as he was addressing the sons of his country, “The only reason why I decided to go on with this martyrdom act is to revenge for the pure blood of our people which is shed every day and even every hour as a result of the strong hatred of Sharon and the Zionist army which did not have any mercy on our women, elderly or children; it is in defense of our right to live in freedom and dignity on our pure land. I carry out this act and I am fully convinced of what I am doing. It is the only choice to stop humiliation and suppression which the enemy planes, tanks and soldiers are practicing on top of our land.”

The family of the Palestinian female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Ayat Al-Akhras were uprooted by the “Israelis” from their village Qatra in 1948; she is the daughter of Dehaisha refugee camp, the camp of uproot and homelessness; its residents are suffering from tragic conditions. She implemented Jerusalem operation on 29 March 2002; three months separated her from getting married to Shadi Abu Laban; her martyrdom influenced their matrimony in spite of the fact that the couple dreams made them agree on the name of the first baby born “Adi”. This operation came in response to the “Israeli” killing of the Palestinian Issa Faraj following a rocket shelling of his house adjacent to Ayat’s house. She was the one who found him drowning in his blood and rushed him to hospital; she saw his two-year-old daughter playing in her father’s blood according to her mother Um Samer. The mother herself was also arrested in 1969 as the first Palestinian female captive in addition to the arrest of Ayat’s brothers Samer and Ismail several times. Ayat wrote in her will, “What is the use of life if death chases us from all directions? We will go to it before it comes to us and revenge for ourselves before we die.”

Hearing the blasts of the “Israeli” shells, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Jihad Titi rushed on 22 May 2002 to the Balata camp graveyard in Nablus where he found the body of his cousin Mahmoud Titi leader of Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in the West Bank and the bodies of two of his companions torn into pieces following an “Israeli” tank shell fired at them. It was not a week after this brutal crime when he implemented his heroic operation in Tel Aviv city on 27 May 2002.

“Martyrdom has no laws; it is not carried out by those who are young or old; it is required to be fulfilled by any Muslim whether married, single or very old.” These are the words uttered by the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Rafiq Hammad one day prior to his martyrdom operation in Tel Aviv on 10 October 2002; he was succeeded by four children and a wife whom he loved very much and could not stand being away from them; however, the call of martyrdom and homeland was stronger than a father’s emotions.

Out of the largest, strongest and most crowded camp called Balata in the West Bank which offered eleven Palestinian refugee suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) who implemented their operation inside the “Israeli” depth came the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ahmed Al-Khatib from Fateh Movement who followed the path of his jihadist family; he carried out Kefar Sava operation on 24 April 2003 in his family’s previous village Kufr Sava which was occupied in 1948. Al-Khatib family is a struggling and resisting family; the “Israeli” occupation forces are still pursuing his elder brother Mohammed on charge of resistance of occupation. His uncle has a life sentence for killing “Israelis”. His cousin is detained for belonging to the Aqsa Martyrs Brigades; his other cousin Majdi was one of the assassinated people by “Israel” in April 2002 together with Qais Adwan leader of Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades in Jenin city. It also assassinated one of his relatives Imad Al-Khatib when it fired its shells towards the camp graveyard targeting Mahmoud Titi leader of Aqsa Brigades on 22 May 2002.

One day before the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ali Ja’ara became 24 years old, he was preparing for another celebration in his own way in Jerusalem on 29 January 2004. He was a son of one of the families whom the Jews expelled in 1948 from their village of Dir Iban Hebron district. His family is well known for its history of resistance and struggle in the ranks of Fateh Movement; all his uncles were put in “Israeli” prisons for long sentences; his aunt Sarah was imprisoned for ten years on charges of stabbing an “Israeli” soldier. She said, “Ali has raised the honor and pride of the family; he is the nephew of the deported fighter Jihad Ja’ara who was besieged by the occupation authorities together with tens of fighters in the Nativity Church in April 2002.” Jihad was suffering from a serious foot injury and the wound decayed during the siege and he was later deported to Cyprus then to Germany. She added, “Ali was in pain for the departure of his uncle and he was strongly shaken by any situation that influences the humanity of humans.” In this context, his mother said, “He was really hurt for the massacre of Zaitun neighborhood in Gaza Strip; I do not rule out that he launched this operation in retaliation for the massacre. He was hurt for every drop of blood shed on the land of Palestine especially the massacres which were committed in Gaza Strip, Nablus and Jenin.” The Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) addressed his will to the “Israelis” and wrote, “Although you hurt our bodies you will never touch our determination and strong will.” He said to the Palestinian people that he decided to offer his life for the sake of Al-Aqsa and the liberation of the people and said to those martyrs who were before him that he wished that his blood had been sacrificed before theirs.

As for the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Mahmoud Salem one of the executors of the dual operation in Ashdod city on 14 March 2004, he wrote in his will addressing the Palestinian people, “We have to defend our blessed land against the occupiers until the last drop of blood in our veins. We will fight them until Jaffa, Haifa and Ashkelon return.” He called on them to hold fast to the option of Jihad and martyrdom. They should keep worshiping God and keep the five

prayers especially the dawn prayer and recite Quran.

The female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Zainab Abu Salem (18 years) from Askar camp carried out a qualitative martyrdom operation in Jerusalem on 22 September 2004, at the French Hill intersection. She blew up her chaste body at a bus station for the occupation soldiers killing and injuring a number of occupying Zionist. This operation comes in response to the crimes of the occupying Zionists the last of which was the assassination of our leaders in Jenin and Nablus.

Two days after the “Israeli” army had fired upon a group of Palestinian mothers on their way to the Beit Hanoun Mosque in Gaza Strip, killing 50, mostly women and children, the suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Mervat Massoud from Gaza strip blew herself up in an Israeli army troops at Beit Hanoun on 6 November 2006. Mervat Massoud was a student at the Islamic University of Gaza. In her videotaped will, she asked the forgiveness of her parents, she said, “I love you very much, but I love Palestine and God more.”

Fatima Najjar, the oldest Palestinian female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya), decided to give up her life for the liberation of the Palestinian people on 23 November 2006. She was the mother of 9 and grandmother of 41 children. Fatima made her decision to carry out the martyrdom operation against the Zionist occupiers two weeks after the “Israeli” shelling in the Gaza town of Beit Hanoun left 19 Palestinians, mostly women and children dead.

9. Martyrdom Operations as Perceived by the Families of the Palestinian Refugee Suicide Martyrs (Istishhadiyin)

The martyrs’ families held the occupation authorities fully responsible for the reasons why their sons/daughters launched these martyrdom operations. This outcome had its indications at the level of the spirit of resistance and the culture of martyrdom which spread strongly in the midst of the Palestinian people; all concerned sides with what is happening in the Palestinian land have to seriously consider these indications especially in the subject of martyrdom culture which had become part of the culture of the Palestinian society, and the Palestinian environment has become ready to produce larger numbers of suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin), since the Palestinian has reached the conclusion that he has become the only loser whether he kept silent towards his everyday suffering or if he carried out a military action targeting “Israelis” (Abdel-Khalek, 2004). This was confirmed in the study of (Victor, 2003) which concludes that how far the Palestinian female suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyat) can be pushed when she is convinced she has nothing to lose. In the same point the study of (Khosrokhavar, 2005) concludes that force (martyrdom operations) is the only language “Israelis” especially their army and politicians understand.

Haj Abdallah Najjar father of the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Hashim, Beit Shean (Bisan) operation on 22 December 2000 stressed that the martyrdom operations are the responsibility of the Jews in principle; they are the ones who brought about hatred and detestation to the Palestinian lands; they are the

ones who are committing massacres one after the other; what the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) are doing is a natural response to the occupation crimes. He added, "Hashim lived a monotonous life where there is killing, homelessness, deportation, arrest, home demolition, children, elderly and women beaten, construction of settlements, and confiscation of lands. All of this has increased his determination to revenge for them all for every drop of blood shed, because of a gun of a loathsome Jew, for every tear shed from the eyes of the afflicted or a widow, for every child's shout and a mother's or a father's sigh."

Um Samer, the first Palestinian female prisoner in 1969 and the mother of the Palestinian female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Ayat Al-Akhras, Jerusalem operation on 29 March 2002 said, "What Ayat did is an honorable act and it is the most successful response to daily occupation crimes which are beyond description, since we as Palestinians have only the weapon of the human bomb (Istishhadiyin) which has threatened the security of 'Israel'; if I only knew that she was going to do this, I would have stopped her and would have gone instead of her, nothing is dearer than ones children." She added, "The whole world was occupied and gained its freedom expect for Palestine, and the occupation requires resistance. As refugees, we need a solution that gives us our rights; when we regain our rights, our land, have a state and see our children released from prison I will go on TV and on satellite stations and say we want peace." Her sister Samah said, "Congratulations on her martyrdom; she deserves this for her courage; we are all martyrdom projects." As for her fiancé Shadi he said, "I only wished that I accompanied her in her heroism where we could die together; may she enjoy her martyrdom, I do pray to God to follow her soon."

As for the father of the Palestinian female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Ayat Al-Akhras, Jerusalem operation on 29 March 2002 said, "I always teach my children to love others but unfortunately, the occupation practices like the daily killing, demolitions, and imprisonments have changed the way boys and girls think. These conditions have forced us and our children to carry out martyrdom operations, since it has become a duty to resist the occupation."

As for the father of the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Ali Ja'ara, Jerusalem operation on 29 January 2004 said that he was proud of his son's heroic operation and his martyrdom option. He added, "What have pushed my son to carry out such operations are the practices of the gratuitous and undue occupation against the Palestinian people. The 'Israeli' violence breeds only violence." As for his aunt Sarah, she said, "Every person has his own way in expressing his love to his country. Ali has expressed his love in the way he liked; he chose a legitimate path of resistance through which he sent a strong message to the 'Israelis'. She went on to say, "I felt proud and rejoiced when I heard that the martyr who blew up himself in Jerusalem was Ali; pride was because he was both a martyr and a hero at the same time and rejoiced because he won the martyrdom that he always wished for."

The father of the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Jihad Titi, Tel Aviv

operation on 27 May 2002 expressed his happiness with the operation and hoped that his son's operation would be one of those operations that the whole world would talk about just for them to know what the Palestinians are really made from.

In Jordan, the family of the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Iyad Radad, executor of Tel Aviv operation on 19 September 2002 said that he always talked about jihad and mujahidin inside Palestine and the suffering of the Palestinian people under the yoke of the occupation which usurped his land and made its people homeless. He always followed up the news and was greatly influenced by the scenes of wounded women and children crying; his heart was attached to Palestine for he was born there in Nablus; he was completely sure that this right which was stolen from us by force can only be regained by force and Jihad for the sake of God.

The mother of the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Abdallah Madhoun one of the executors of the dual operation with his partner Anwar Shabarawi at Erez checkpoint in Gaza Strip on 1 April 1997 said, "Abdallah is like the rising sun and the other sun was Anwar May God have mercy upon him. I would like to stress that we are very happy for the martyrdom of Abdallah; it is the choice of God for the good; we are happy because we believe and realize the meaning of the prophet's tradition may God's peace and prayer be upon him, Whatever happens to the believer is surprising; all his matters are good; if harm inflicts upon him he would thank God for this is good for him and if harm is inflicted upon him, he would have patience since this is good for him too."

"I will look at the sea whenever I miss him May God have Mercy on him; he wished for martyrdom and he won it; my son like other martyrs has raised my head in the sky." These were the words uttered by the martyr's mother Hamdi Inseo executor of sea operation off the coast of Rafah city on 7 November 2000 while she was expressing her view of the Palestinian martyrdom operations (Al-Amaliyat Al-Istishhadiya). She talked about the vacuum his departure had created and uttered with stamina and endurance, "May God bestow patience on the people; this is God's command and our fate; he lived honored and died the same; we are all martyrs for the sake of Jerusalem." It is worth mentioning that the neighborhood residents in which she was staying named her Mother of Heroes since she became the mother of a martyr, a prisoner, a wanted and an injured.

The mother of the Palestinian female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Wafa Idris, Jerusalem operation on 27 January 2002 said, "There is nothing in the world which is more difficult than separation, May God be with her I will never forget her as long as I lived."

10. Conclusion

The martyrdom operations have been developed within the framework of the Palestinian resistance to defeat occupation. Accordingly, the resistance strategy holds fast to a fixed title which indicates that as long as there is occupation there is resistance. This simply means its continuation in the long run besides other forms

of resistance until the expulsion of occupation. It is expected that the Palestinian people would continue to attempt and invent new fighting ways and techniques which are more effective than martyrdom operations. It is right that they are not going to liberate Palestine undoubtedly, but their basic benefit is that they keep the sound of resistance and the sound of the Palestinian question alive in the hearts of the sons of the Arab and Islamic nations until the historic moment comes when they regain what was occupied of the lands of Palestine in addition to the fact that they strike deep into the Zionist project and delay its growth and expansion on the Arab and Islamic arena.

Palestinian martyrdom operations are group innovative operations with multiple formulas and levels. They are innovative in action which the Palestinians developed through their new means and techniques of resistance which attracted the attention of the whole world in general and scholars and thinkers in particular. It is innovation in value represented in directing an influential act towards achievements that carry present and future social values. The Palestinian people have established through their struggle the symbolism of resistance and struggle against the occupier inside the collective conscience of the world; in fact, it has become an example followed by liberation movements in the world; it is for the first time in modern history in which the human bomb becomes a comprehensive social phenomenon that sweeps through large segments of the entire people and not only a handful of dedicated individuals. In Palestine the self-sacrifice has lost its distinction and instead it has become the natural expansion of the culture of resistance.

The Palestinian people were forced to adopt martyrdom operations in order to create deterrence equivalence. The battle in facing the "Israeli" aggression which depends on the supremacy in military equipment and gear is uneven. If the Palestinian people had a counter weapon to that of the "Israeli" or close to it, they would fight with it the traditional conventional way. However, they are defending themselves with the available means; I do believe that if the world community were fair with the Palestinians and stopped the occupation, we would not be in need for martyrdom operations. It is irrational to ask the Palestinian people to stop resistance and martyrdom operations while it is still under the yoke of the "Israeli" occupation. Within this context, the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady) Hisham Hamad executor of Netzarim settlement in Gaza Strip on 11 November 1994 wrote in his will, "The battle is imposed on everybody, do not wait at the doors of tomorrow which you do not have of it anything but humiliation." The same was in the study of (O'Neal, 2005) which considers the martyrdom operations (human weapon) as the most effective weapon against the technologically advanced militaries.

It is certain that the Palestinian people cannot stand fold handed and do nothing towards the crimes of the occupation and turn their back as a sign of surrender. If this is not the time for a response to the occupation massacres and bloodbaths, when will it be? Self-defense is part of human composition and tempera-

ment. Anyone who traces the history of the world will find that response to aggression by all forms of resistance is a subjective historical phenomenon that does not relate to one people than the other (Qasem, 2004).

Accordingly, the Palestinian people resistance of occupation is considered a natural response. Martyrdom operations are one of the legitimate resistance means; the Palestinian suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) did not come in an arbitrary manner; in fact, the occupation conditions are the reason behind having such operations. Thus it is illogical to blame the Palestinian people who are the victims for what they are doing? They are defending themselves. The aggressor is the one who is to be blamed. It is the right of the occupied people in all laws and jurisdictions whether heavenly or earthly, to defend themselves, their right of return and self-determination for Palestinians.

Since 1948, the Palestinian people have been exposed to most brutal forms of annihilation, persecution and occupation; they resorted to resistance and martyrdom operations in order to liberate their country from occupation and to defend themselves and their rights and dignity. The people choose the approach of martyrdom operations in order to practice their right of return, self-determination, sovereignty and independence based on the UN Charter and the rest of international covenants and conventions, principles of international law and international legitimacy resolutions.

Palestinians represent now the largest group of refugees which are being overlooked since the Second World War. It is still present and it is clearly witnessed in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and in the Diaspora (Kana'na, 2000; Banat, 2002). Commenting on this subject, the young man Ihsan Abu Warda from Al-Fawwar refugee camp and brother of Majdi Abu Warda, one of the suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) who executed a dual martyrdom operation on 25 February 1996 said, "I will never lose sight of our hopes of returning to our own village, Iraq Al-Mansheya. What my brother Majdi did is honorable. We are proud of that. There is no one among us who wishes to die or to end his life in the prime of life. The Nakba has been echoing in our minds for seventy-seven years, and the camp has been the biggest witness to that event. So far, we have found no Arab or international serious attempt to recover our rights, and we have found these regimes only talking about peace and surrender". He added: "The 'Israeli' violence did not stop at this point. Every day we see barbaric 'Israeli' massacres perpetuated against the Palestinians with the absence, if not support, of the world. All of that has provided a sufficient motivation for my brother and other martyrs to lead the struggle march by themselves in order to restore our usurped land to which the 'Israelis' have no right, and take revenge on the enemy, the oppressor, who forced our people out of their homes and occupied our land". The mother of the suicide martyr (Istishhady) Majdi felt that martyrdom operations are the only salvation of the Palestinian people from the occupation, adding: "As refugees, we are waiting for the day on which we return to our home, Iraq Al-Mansheya. This will not happen but through martyrdom and suicide martyrs

(Istishhadiyin) from our free Palestinian people, even if we have to sacrifice all our children to this end; what was taken by force can only be restored by force”.

As for Mahmoud Sarahneh the brother of the Palestinian suicide martyr (Istishhady), Ibrahim, he said, “Ibrahim lives the life of a refugee in Fawwar camp away from his original hometown ‘Ajjur’. He lived like other refugees on unfulfilled promises of return, but he decided to be one of those knights whose blood paves the road for their return; what was taken by force is retrieved by force”.

As for the mother of the Palestinian refugee female suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Ayat Al-Akhras, Jerusalem operation on 29 March 2002 said, “We are living in misery, my people are living in a camp, we have nothing, it is very crowded, your window opens into your neighbors’ window, a street is one meter wide. As refugees we need a solution that gives us our rights”.

The expulsion of Palestinian refugees has turned into a factor of strength for the Palestinian people in the struggle against occupation. Palestinian refugees are more determined to resist and return to their villages, towns and cities. The suicide martyr (Istishhadiya) Fatima Najjar, is a woman who experienced the Nakba of Palestine. She saw the exodus of the Palestinians from their lands in 1948. Her days were mixed with grief and sorrow. That woman, whose face would tell the pitfalls of the bitter time, had no hesitation, not for a moment, in carrying out a martyrdom operation amid a large group of “Israeli” soldiers in Gaza Strip on 23 November 2006, confirming that the Nakba generation, the generation of the 1948 Palestinian exodus, marks the beginning of martyrdom and repatriation generation.

When growing up, Palestinian refugee suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) heard their parents’ stories about houses that were left behind, or about land that was lost when “Israel” was established and the Independence War (1948) erupted.

Palestinian refugee suicide martyrs (Istishhadiyin) came from all the Palestinian camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, some of which offered several martyrs. From the largest and most crowded camp of Balata in the West Bank (20 thousand inhabitants), eleven martyrs set out to execute their operations deep inside “Israel”, such as Ahmad Al-Khatib, Alaa Marshood, Iyad Harb, etc. This camp has been subjected to the worst forms of “Israeli” oppression, incursions and invasions since April 2002. Between the first invasion, which was called then “Field of Thorns,” and the last invasion “Stagnant Water” which overburdened the camp, there are hundreds of stories and painful humanitarian details which are impossible for a non-Palestinian to live with. The images of the martyrs fill the place; they are present although their bodies are absent from the streets of the camp. People always anticipate confrontations with the occupation forces; pictures are on the walls of the small houses, in narrow streets, shops, schools and on empty desks. “Israeli” terrorism was not confined to people in the camp. It targeted the houses as is the case with all other places in Palestine. The occupation forces destroyed 20 houses and damaged about 500 houses completely according to statistics by the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Refugees in the

camp (Khalil, 2004).

The camp residents are still giving lessons in patience and steadfastness which will not be erased from the Palestinian memory. Young people from one generation to another will keep passing them. Generally, in order to come close to the mystery behind the rush and eagerness of young refugees to carry out suicide attacks, we must not lose sight of the fact that the refugees prepare the ground for the memory of pains of the past, the Nakba in 1948, the massacres committed by the "Israelis", and the places from which they were displaced and uprooted to continue. When children are at the age of five, their parents take them to stand in front of their destroyed villages, point to the ruins of their homes, tell them again the names of the streets and hills that used to be, and tell them about harvest evenings and the dreams of the moonlit nights when there were no invaders, so children will not forget all these memories when they become men and Palestine becomes deeply rooted in their hearts like an olive tree. Stories about the earth baptized with the pain of olives will remain in the heart of the Palestinian who cannot forget the image of his homeland which will stay forever in his immortal memory. Palestinian refugees took their history with them, lived on the borders of their country, and taught their children and grandchildren the meanings of pride and homeland, and the bitterness of being a refugee and the cruelty of confrontation. This is how the culture of martyrdom was created in their hearts and minds. The refugee camps witnessed the birth of the Palestinian resistance factions, and from there the struggle began, the rush and race of young refugees to carry out suicide attacks, believing that their resistance, martyrdom operations is the only way to bring their families back to their lands and mother country.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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