

If I Blow Myself Up and Become a Martyr, I'll Finally be Loved
by Lloyd deMause

A recent study published in the scholarly journal *Child Abuse and Neglect* reported on a careful survey of 652 Palestinian undergraduates about their memories of being sexually abused by a family member, a relative or a stranger. The study concluded that 18.6% were used sexually by a family member, 36.2% by a relative and 45.6% by a stranger.¹ Since these figures add up to more than 100%, some of those questioned obviously were abused by two or three of these categories. But the figures are so much higher than anything I have found in my extensive research over the past three decades into the history of child abuse² that they confirm other evidence that the Palestinians, like other Islamic cultures, routinely abuse their children, sexually, physically and emotionally, from birth.³ In fact, it would seem that these figures from undergraduates are actually *underreported* for Palestinian society as a whole, since (a) they are just for the more wealthy families who can afford to send their children to college, who are likely to be somewhat less abusive, (b) they are self-reports, which means that just from shame alone they are usually understated, and (c) they are reports only of *conscious* memories, so that any repressed memories and seductions too early to remember are usually not reported. I have found these three kinds of underreporting often can double the reported figures, meaning that Palestinians actually sexually abuse by far the majority of their children. The report also finds "significantly higher levels of psychoticism, hostility, anxiety, somatization, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, depression, obsessive-compulsiveness and psychological distress" in those reporting sexual abuse.

Raped children are said to have "brought it upon themselves", and girls particularly who are raped are actually blamed for their victimization, on the grounds that "women who don't ask to be raped will never be raped".⁴ In general, using young girls sexually fits the patriarchal Palestinian view of females as "the source of all evil, anarchy and deception."⁵

That the Palestinian figures reveal "no significant differences between females and males"⁶ in sexual abuse rates is an extremely unusual condition which, again, is often reported in Islamic societies- boys in Western societies usually being molested and raped only one quarter as often as girls. That Islamic boys are routinely sexually abused, usually by anal penetration, has been reported by many throughout history. According to an Arab sociologist, men regularly keep young boys in their extended families for pederastic use in Islamic societies, since women are considered "unclean", using little boys anally avoids what is considered the "voracious vaginas" of women, and, after all, "the mere sign of pretty boys is regarded... as terribly tempting".⁷ One ex-PLO terrorist, Walid Shoebat, reported that "Palestine is a strange society. Homosexuality is forbidden, but if you're the penetrator, not the penetrated, it's okay... Once, on a hiking trip, I saw a line of shepherd boys waiting for their turn to sodomize a five-year-old boy. It was unbelievable... teenage boys prey upon younger children; older male relatives prey upon pre-adolescent and adolescent boys and girls."⁸ Although Shoebat says "most Arabs and Muslims will deny that this is so," my own research confirms that it is widespread in the Islamic nations of the Middle East.

Granqvist reports that most infants in Palestine are tightly swaddled during their first six months.⁹ The physical battering of both girls and boys from birth for small misdemeanors is widespread throughout Muslim societies. Visitors to families report on the "slapping, striking and thrashing" of children. A typical report of Islamic cultures says, "A large number of children face some form of physical abuse, from infanticide and abandonment of babies, to beating, shaking, burning, cutting, poisoning, holding underwater or giving drugs or alcohol, or violent acts like punching, kicking, biting, choking, beating, shooting, or stabbing."¹⁰ Islamic schools regularly practice severe corporal punishment.¹¹ "Honor killings" of girls who are blamed for their own and others' sexual abuse are said to be widespread in Palestine.

All this routine child abuse is said by most academic scholars to have no effect upon the adults in the society. Typical is the opinion of the academics in the recent book *Psychology of Terrorism*,¹² who find that "interviews with terrorists rarely find any disorder listed in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*." In other words, if a terrorist is able to function at all, even if they are suicidal and homicidal, they are "normal". Terrorists are not psychopaths, these academics say, "since they are able to trust each other," so it is claimed that "30 years of research has found little evidence that terrorists are suffering from psychopathology." Most recent books on Palestine suicide bombers that purport to look at their motivations-like Mia Bloom's *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*¹³- propose that suicide terrorists are just using an "effective bargaining tactic," surely an easily disprovable notion since killing innocent Israelis, mainly women and children, has only *worsened* the amount of violence and *decreased* the ability to live together and benefit from trade. Bloom assures us that terrorists "are not suffering from mental illness or personality disorders", and suggest that "high unemployment rates" might be the central cause of their violence.¹⁴

Fortunately, there are two psychohistorians in addition to myself who have found from extensive research exactly the opposite. Joan Lachkar and Nancy Kobrin believe that terrorists are borderline personalities, "walking time bombs" from continuous child abuse, with absent fathers "forever connect to their 'mother of pain'", forming relational bonds that are

destructive and painful (traumatic bonding). "As horrific as the emotional pain is, it is preferable to a black hole." They say, "At least I know that I am alive. I feel excited. I have meaning and purpose to my life... it's done 'for Allah's sake, hurts less than a gnat's bite'".¹⁵ Lachkar concludes that Islamic cultures, like borderlines, "are dominated by shame/blame defenses, have defective bonding and dependency needs, are extremely envious, and will retaliate at any cost. They are lacking in impulse control, have poor reality testing, and... suffer from profound fears of abandonment and annihilation, as well as persecutory anxieties."¹⁶ Their relationship with their loveless mothers are repeated in their fantasies about Allah: "If I pray five times a day, kill myself, sacrifice my needs/desires, I will be loved by Allah." Mothers often announce that they are raising martyrs who will die for Allah, even picking which son should die and which must remain alive to support her in her old age.¹⁷ Speckhard reports, "In Palestinian territories, there currently exists a 'cult of martyrdom'. From a very young age children are socialized into a group consciousness that honors martyrs... posters decorate the walls of towns and rock and music videos extol the virtues of bombers... the bombers describe their psychological state (with their bombs strapped on) as one of "floating" or "bliss" [disassociation]."¹⁸ The terrorists, says Lachkar, "conjure up an imaginary companion or "idealized" father like Allah to die for, saying "I'm going to meet the Lord of the universe." All imagine they would still be around to watch their parents be sorry they had killed themselves. 'Every time my father sees my photo, he'll cry.' This is an obvious dialogue with a long-lost father object, a severe yearning for contact. The cries are for the love they had missed all their lives".¹⁹ They are not wrong. Their parents do want them to kill themselves. Mothers of martyrs are often reported as happy that their sons died because they then could feel like their sons would never leave them. As one mother of a Palestinian suicide bomber who had blown himself to bits put it, "with resolutely cheerful countenance,"

*I was very happy when I heard. To be a martyr, that's something. Very few people can do it. I prayed to thank God. I know my son is close to me.*²⁰

The son had been about to graduate from the university, about to separate from his mother, to individuate, to self-activate. The mother was about to "lose" him. So when he killed himself, she was happy about his suicide, because now he would always be "close to her," like a comfort blanket.

The result of all this early abuse and violent training to be a suicidal terrorist is as might be expected. For instance, one Palestinian psychologist, Dr. Dhafiq Massalha, conducted an experiment recently with a random sample of 150 boys and girls aged ten and eleven to whom he had distributive notebooks, asking them to record their dreams. "The results, though predictable, were still shocking. A Palestinian girl aged eleven dreamt she went into a market in Israel with bombs all over her body. She stopped in the crowd of shoppers, counted to ten, then blew herself up, according to an account of his findings. He found that 78% of the dreams were political, and most of them included physical violence. Half of the children dreamed of becoming suicide bombers."²¹ That Arafat and others endlessly told children they should become martyrs and that these messages have been daily shown on TV even in between children's cartoons is just a later version of the parental dicta telling their children it is their duty to kill themselves and others "for Allah".²² Palestinian children are often given suicide belts by their parents to march around and in practice their suicides.²³ And that there is a parallel between the sexual submission of young boys to older men in Palestinian society and their later submission to the will of Allah is emphasized by scholars who notes that "love for the divinely beautiful boy is clearly mixed with a love of the Creator" in Muslim religious poetry.²⁴

Even the terrorist's choice of exploding themselves has childhood roots, since they restage the explosive sexual assaults they experienced when being raped his children. As one psychiatrist who interviewed many terrorists reported:

We have to study their fantasies to understand these men. The sexual importance is sometimes striking. For some, when a bomb goes off, it is like an orgasm... One fellow told me he felt "liberated" every time he heard a bomb explode. Some others told me they would place a bomb, then sit out on a balcony and listen. When the "boom" came, it was a great relief.

What happens in neurobiologically during early child abuse is that the child's pain and fears are implanted in a disassociated state in amygdalan fear networks in their brain. Later in life they hear the voices of their Punishing Parents every time they try to individuate, to experience their own needs and develop their own selves, every time they do something the parent for which themselves were punished as children-all forbidden activities.²⁵ A child being sexually abused can only conclude that they are "bad" inside-indeed, they are told all the time their own sexual needs are "bad"-and so, what they do is fuse with their Punishing Parents in their own heads (experienced as God) and find others to victimize, to kill. As Palestinian suicide terrorists kill, they fuse with their Killer Parent alter in their heads and shout ""Allahu akbar," "God [Mommy, Daddy] is greatest!" and experience "an expression of empowerment" during the fusion with their powerful Killer Parent alter. Thus the Hamas goal of "death in the service of God" is in fact a death in the service of the Killer Parent and "death to the Israelis" means death to their own "bad boy" self.

That abusive childrearing practices have a profound effect on producing suicide terrorists is certain. But in addition the

overt violence experienced by children living in a war zone or in depriving refugee camps simply adds to the traumatic distress of their childhoods. As high as one-fifth of Palestinian children are chronically hungry today,²⁶ hundreds of Palestinian children have been killed in Israel's attempt to crush the *intifada*, and children exposed to bombardment and demolition has been found to have severe post-traumatic stress disorders.²⁷ Children whose parents are killed in the violence or who are otherwise separated from them are set to "quietly cry."²⁸ and their early losses cannot help but increase the need for violence in the future. What can be done to prevent all these children who are badly traumatized by their families and societies from growing up as human time bombs?

Prevention of terrorism rather than revenge should be our goal for the future. Rather than backing military solutions to Palestinian terrorism, America and Israel should instead to back a UN-sponsored Marshall Plan for them, designed to reduce the abusive childrearing that is creating the terrorists. Just as the Marshall Plan we created for Germans and Austrians after WWII allowed families to evolve far beyond those that produced Nazism, we must put real money and organized effort into a Palestinian Parenting Plan that will help families get better parenting to their children. There are, in fact, several parenting centers in Palestine, like the Palestine happy Child Center in Ramallah, which was established in 1994 as a grassroots non-governmental organization to promote the welfare of young Palestinian children "through a holistic approach to child development".²⁹ The center operates now on grants from The Jerusalem Fund, but if Centers could even be supported by Israeli and American funds they might reduce the sense that Israel and America are simply "against Palestinians".

There are three kinds of support for parents that have become very successful in vastly reducing child abuse when implemented in American cities. All of these have been regularly reported on in *The Journal of Psychohistory*. The first is Robert McFarlane's 23-year-old Community Parenting Center in Boulder, Colorado. Their mission is to "relieve the isolation, reduce the stress of parenting and prevent child abuse and neglect by providing outreach and a place where families can receive support, education and develop a sense of community."³⁰ The Center provides lectures for parents by other parents, play groups for children with puppet shows demonstrating parent-child interactions, postpartum depression assistance, support groups that help with coping with behavioral problems without hitting the child, help for unmarried mothers and immigrants, talks on setting limits for toddlers, and even the free home visits to new mothers by volunteers who give pediatric and psychological help. The Parenting Center is free to all who want to use its resources, and is quite inexpensive to run, especially since it has been shown that for every dollar invested in better parenting by the Center the state saves perhaps a hundred dollars in later costs of social services, hospital costs, and jails. The same welcome results have been shown by centers in other states, such as the Parent Child Center Network in Vermont and the Hawaii Healthy Start Program.³¹

A second child support program is the Home Visiting Program run by the state of Colorado in conjunction with the Boulder Parenting Center. This program, (see www.nccfc.org) sends nurses to meet regularly with mothers who might abuse children during their pregnancy and continuing until the child's second birthday. "This has arguably been one of the most effective and demonstrably successful child abuse prevention interventions yet studied and replicated."³²

A third effective program was recently started in New York City by Margaret R. Kind, M.D., a psychiatrist, who taught a course on parenting in the city school system to 30 high school classes. It is, of course, extremely revealing that although parenting is one of the most important jobs in every nation in the world, there has until now never been actual courses teaching it in any school. Students learn about children's needs for love, attachment, commitment, admiration, toleration and empathy, and learn how to have discipline without distress-causing punishment, discomfort or physical pain. In this way children are not being taught maladaptive or antisocial responses to others' behaviors.

In this program, students are surprised to learn how important early relationships are to the infant, and use an excellent textbook (*The Six Stages of Parenthood* by Ellen Galinsky) to go through the parenting stages. They are frequently surprised also by how much time caring for an infant takes, and begin to plan their own lives so they can be available to the child as they grow up. What is most astonishing is how enthusiastic the students are about taking the course; I myself read a large stack of their final comments about the course and they were not only praising of how they learned both what not to do and what they could do, even if it were different than what their parents did, but they said, "Now I can be a successful parent! I was not sure before that I could" and "I think more people should have the opportunity to take a course like this, and avoid a lot of mistakes... mistakes that are a matter of life and death." As Kind puts it, "The students *loved* the course and they, themselves, suggested that it be mandated that it be taught to all high school students! Their enthusiasm was remarkable, well expressed, and gratifying."³³

Kind calls her program "A Primary Prevention Program." I propose that a Palestinian Marshall Plan that supports Parenting Centers, Home Visiting Programs and High School Parenting Courses-plus any other family assistance programs that Palestinians can propose-will be effective "primary prevention" that will reduce terrorism and other social violence in the future. It may seem too long-term, but if-as I found during my four decades of research-child abuse and neglect are the

central causes of wars, terrorism and social violence,³⁴ Prevention of terrorism can only be accomplished by helping the family to be more loving, more nurturing and more respectful of their children's independence.

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