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### The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women

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## The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women

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A Muslim woman is a female Jihad warrior always and everywhere. She is a female Jihad warrior who wages Jihad by means of funding Jihad. She wages Jihad by means of waiting for her Jihad warrior husband, and when she educates her children to that which Allah loves. She wages jihad when she supports Jihad when she calls for jihad in word, deed, belief, and prayer.

—Umm Badr, “Obstacles in the Path of the Jihad Warrior Woman,”  
*al-Khansaa*<sup>1</sup>

*When women carry out a suicide attack they undermine the idea of who and what a terrorist is. What is generally not realized is the extent to which women are involved in terrorism. The purpose of this article is to explore and to analyze the multifaceted roles of the women in the movement of Al Qaeda. The argument is that the role of the women the world audience perceives is the one of a suicide bomber but the role of an ideological supporter and operational facilitator is more important for the maintenance of the operational capabilities and the ideological motivation for a terrorist organization. This article argues that the women follow a gender-specific interpretation of the radical ideology, the female Jihad. The concept of the female Jihad means that the women carry out a political act by supporting their male relatives, educating their children in the ideology and facilitating terrorist operations. The female Jihad is defective when the women follow the male Jihad interpretation of the Jihad by carrying out attacks. For the survival of a terrorists organization women are more important when they follow the female version of the ideology. Because the men could get arrested, die in an attack, or could get shot by the security forces, the women continue to take care about the financial issues of the organization and continue to educate the children in the “right” belief. To verify these arguments the article is divided into three parts. The first part will look at the motivation of women participation at a terrorism organization and the motivation of a terrorism organization to use women for its purposes. The second part tries to throw some light on the female suicide bombers who acted under the umbrella of the movement of Al Qaeda. In this part the female terrorist attacks will be analyzed. In the third part Sisterhoods will be explained and the concept of the female Jihad will be analyzed. The findings of this article about the involvement of women in the movement of Al Qaeda will bring us to conclusion that women do play an essential role in these organizations*

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*and groups. Following the argument that successful counterterrorism should address both the motivation and the operational capabilities of a terrorist organization there is an essential need for the national security forces to expand their capabilities to look more carefully at women.*

The concept of terrorism, particularly against a soft target, is shocking enough to most liberal Western audiences; however, the use of female attackers exacerbates the already potent psychological effect of suicide terrorism. The history of women's involvement in various terrorist organizations is long and established. The first "successful" female suicide bomber was a 17-year-old Lebanese girl Sana Mahaydali known as the "The Bride of the South." In 1985, she was dispatched by the Syrian Socialist Party (SSNP/PPS) a pro Syrian Lebanese organization, to blow herself up near some vehicles carrying Israeli soldiers in Lebanon. "This paved the way for several other Lebanese women acting on behalf of other terrorist organizations. From Lebanon, the use of female suicide bombers spread to other countries and within few years was adopted by the LTTE and the Kurdish PKK"<sup>2</sup> The women of the LTTE are responsible for one third of all suicide bombings in Sri Lanka whereas the female PKK members have carried out two thirds of that organization's suicide bombings. During the last year's women have played a central role in the Chechen campaign of suicide bombings directed against Russia. What these groups have/had in common, however, is that they are/were leftist or nationalist-separatist oriented. One of the most surprising developments in terrorism organizations has been the way in which suicide terrorism of religious terrorist groups has opened the stage for entry of female combatants, who are increasingly involved in what was once an exclusively male-dominated area.

All of these women undermine the idea of what a terrorist is. The intuitive assumptions presume that terrorists and terrorism are a man's preserve. Most people still believe that women would not kill in such a barbaric and indiscriminate way that targets innocent people. This is why there is usually a public outcry of horror against women terrorists. Even when, throughout history, women have played a relatively minor role in these terrorist organizations what is generally not realized is the extent to which women are involved in terrorism.<sup>3</sup>

The function of the women in religious terrorism organizations and movements is multifaceted. The role the world audience perceives is the one of a suicide bomber but the role of an ideological supporter and operational facilitator is not less important for the survival of the organization, the maintenance of the operational capabilities, and the ideological motivation. Concluding even when women are invisible for the world audience they play an essential role in the short- and long-term survival of the terrorist organization. In this article all three functions of women will be analyzed.

### **The Motivation for the Women and the Organization**

Female terrorism is on the rise<sup>4</sup> and is expected to increase in the future. Between 1985 and 2006, 225 women suicide bombers acting on behalf of many different kinds of terrorist organizations have been observed and dozens of women have been arrested whose suicide missions failed. While the personal motivations of female terrorists differ from the organizational motives for recruiting them, the two are converging to produce an increased number of female terrorists. In these groups, the use of women in terrorist attacks carried out by Islamist organizations is rare but not a new issue. Some of the most shocking recent incidents of female suicide terrorism have occurred during the current

Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Suicide bombing, particularly during the present Intifada, has become one of the dominant features of the asymmetric campaign being waged against Israel by the Palestinian terrorists. Female terrorism is increasing because women are motivated to engage in political violence and organizations are facing stronger incentives to recruit female operatives. To understand why female terrorism is on the rise, both individual and organizational motives must be explored. While media reporting has often suggested that most females suicide bombers, like their male counterparts, go eagerly to their deaths fueled by an unshakeable fervor, the truth may be more complex. While there are no concrete figures concerning the extent of women's current involvement, many commentators have observed that female participation in terrorism has significantly increased since 1976.<sup>5</sup> At the individual level, women are motivated to participate in terrorism for political and very personal reasons. Attempts have been made to profile female suicide bombers in the hope that common threats in their characters and motivations can be found. It is very difficult to profile female suicide bombers or female facilitators and supporters who are coming from every educational, religious, social, and personal background. But female terrorists share more than the use of a certain fighting strategy, namely terrorism. Female suicide bombing occurs in patriarchal societies in which these women originated, and by taking into account how deeply rooted the values are that separated the female roles from that of the male.<sup>6</sup> At this point it has to be mentioned that Chechnya and Palestine are the locations where women participate in martyrdom operations on a large scale. These places are the most secularized and well-educated areas in the Arab countries. Analyzing the biographies of the women who acted under the umbrella of Al Qaeda it is obvious that in most cases the education level is above-average compared to other female Muslims. In every culture from which female suicide bombers have originated, women are, compared to the Western world, restricted to the private sphere: taking care of the home and the children. While women stay at home, men's tasks are conducted in the outer world.<sup>7</sup> This article argues that women are similarly interested in power in the assigned scope by the society they are living in. This scope in fundamentalist societies is normally the family. Encouraging the male relatives to participate in a terrorism organization and supporting as well as facilitating operations gives women power and access to the public realm. In recent years women have been entrusted with key positions in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. While most of them deal with its organizational aspects, that is, helping out with logistics in the West Bank and running "charitable societies" as a cover for PIJ activities, some of them have also been directly involved in supporting and funding its terrorist activities. A cell of women who transferred money from Damascus to the West Bank was uncovered by the Israeli Security Agency in November 2006. All those detained were sisters or wives of *Shaheeds* and PIJ detainees.<sup>8</sup> Also, fund-raising activities by women in other middle Eastern-based groups such as the PKK and the Mujahadeen-e-Khalq (MEK) in North America suggest that women's roles have the potential to be more expansive both within and outside of the Palestinian setting.<sup>9</sup>

Carrying out attacks allows them to fulfil traditional male duties and having the chance of being honored by the society they are living in. Especially for female converts who converted to the radical ideology, active participation is a logical consequence of their commitment. Female terrorists are motivated by many of the same reasons as men, but the gender-based oppression they face creates additional motivation. "The real reasons that motivate women, as opposed to the rational that creates male suicide bombers, are subtle and indicative of the second-class status of women in that part of the world."<sup>10</sup> Terrorist attacks occur in the public realm from which women are otherwise excluded. Female terrorists are thus able to pursue opportunities other than the limited ones available in traditional societies.

This suggests that female subordination is linked to female participation in terrorism. As agents of violence, women are no longer defined according to their gendered roles. In this case participation in terrorism is a means through which women can pursue a misinterpreted understanding of female liberation or emancipation. As a result of the absence of other role models the radical women do believe gender equality means being as violent as their male counterparts are. Especially in Palestinian society the only way to become a female hero is by carrying out a suicide attack.

Many women choose to join a terrorist organization to seek vengeance, because the men suffer the majority of casualties from counterterrorism, failed missions, and successful suicide bombing operations.<sup>11</sup> Faced with the loss of male family members, women are motivated to take up arms. This phenomenon is observable where women's participation in terrorism begins later chronologically than men's. In Chechnya, female terrorists are called "Black Widows," as they are "prepared to kill and to die to avenge the deaths of fathers, husbands, brothers and sons at the hands of Russian troops in the current war or the one in the 1990s."<sup>12</sup> A contributing factor is the routine rape of the Chechen women by the Russian soldiers.<sup>13</sup> As a consequence the women are driven to terrorism by a desire to regain their personal or family honor. As previously mentioned, women in traditional societies are governed by a strict set of social, cultural, and religious rules. If women break these rules, they are ostracized by society and bring shame on themselves and their family. As a result of this marginalization, women may seek refuge in a terrorist organization. These groups offer a double benefit to these women by accepting them when they no longer have options in mainstream society, and allowing them to regain their honor by committing a terrorist act. By participating in armed struggle, these women are able to gain the dignity in death that they lost in life.<sup>14</sup> In Sri Lanka, terrorism is often seen as a viable option for Tamil women who are survivors of sexual violence. Following a rape, Tamil women are considered "damaged goods" and social customs prevent them from getting married or bearing children.<sup>15</sup> The shame brought on by sexual violation is thus magnified by the humiliation of not being able to fulfil childbearing duties.<sup>16</sup> Their participation compensates for their inability to give birth to future generations, and restores their personal and familial dignity.

In general, female terrorists are motivated by political and personal reasons. The wish and goal to carry out a political act should also not be underestimated. Concluding, there exist many motivations for women to engage in terrorism in different ways. Even when the involvement of females in terrorist operation is on the rise it is still a rare issue.

To understand the scope and rise of female terrorism, organizational motives for recruiting women must be explored. Women may want to become actively engaged in the conflict, but the evolution of women's role from supportive to active is initiated at the organizational level. There is a great disparity between what motivates women to join a terrorist group, and what encourages a group to recruit women.<sup>17</sup> Regardless of women's individual motives, terrorist organizations are rational and calculating actors. The use of terrorist violence is part of a political strategy and represents "a wilful choice made by an organization for political and strategic reasons."<sup>18</sup> Changes in targets, perpetrators, and tactics can be understood under this framework. The use of female operatives in a male-dominated activity represents a tactical change by terrorist organizations. These groups "tend to adapt to high levels of external pressure by altering their techniques and targets."<sup>19</sup> Women provide many benefits to terrorist groups and organizations are increasingly recruiting women as a strategic choice. The use of women provides a new media dimension, which the terrorist group intends for the media to interpret as an indication of a worsening situation. Media images of women terrorists serve as powerful propaganda

tools. Suicide bombers provide a low-cost, low-technology, low-risk weapon that maximizes target destruction and instills fear—women are even more effective with their increased accessibility and media shock value. Female terrorists tend to garner more media attention than men because the “thought of those who bring forth life actually destroying it is disturbing.”<sup>20</sup> The idea of women acting as agents of violence runs completely counter to expectations of femininity; images of female terrorists thus attract widespread publicity, and disseminate the organization’s message to a wider audience.

If organizations believe that increased female participation is to their advantage, they are likely to encourage this participation in any way possible. Religious justifications, for example, have been manipulated to facilitate more women terrorists. While the Islamic religious establishment long opposed and actively condemned women’s participation in violent struggles, it has dramatically changed its position. Having seen the positive results and strategic benefits of allowing women’s participation in terrorism, the religious establishment has gone so far as to provide an ex post facto justification for women’s involvement in terror.<sup>21</sup> Finally, female terrorists have a greater capacity for mobilizing support than their male colleagues. Female terrorists provide strong role models for other women who may then seek to emulate their heroine’s actions. Female terrorism also increases male recruitment because men can be shamed into joining when women appear to be usurping their dominant role in conflict.<sup>22</sup> For example, following the first female Palestinian suicide attack in January 2002, the Egyptian Islamist weekly newspaper *Al-Sha’ab* taunted, “It is a woman, a woman, a woman who is a source of pride for the women of this nation and a source of honor that shames the submissive men with a shame that cannot be washed away except by blood.”<sup>23</sup> To mobilize both men and women, female members are important to maintain the recruitment mechanism of terrorist organizations.

While terrorist organizations seek to achieve many goals, their primary objective is survival.<sup>24</sup> Women are often recruited when membership is dwindling and there is a pressing need for more fighters to continue the struggle (e.g., in protracted conflicts or following severe losses of male members). In Sri Lanka, for example, women have been actively involved in the LTTE since 1986, but the number of female fighters significantly increased after 1990. In June of that year, the LTTE suffered significant losses in the battle at Elephant Pass and women were called to action to replace the losses.<sup>25</sup> The long-term survival of a terrorist group is often dependent on female participation to fill the ranks by themselves or by the men they persuaded to join the organization.

Concluding, while the individual motivations of female suicide bombers are multifaceted and strongly influenced by the social values they are the living in, they provide many considerable advantages for terrorist organizations. First, they provide a tactical advantage: stealthier attack, an element of surprise, hesitancy to search for women, and the female stereotype is perceived as nonviolent. Second, the inclusion of women as suicide bombers would increase the number of combatants. Third, this would increase the publicity of an attack and the psychological effect would be much higher. One of the key questions is, why are there so few female terrorists?

### **Al Qaeda’s Female Suicide Bombers**

Having all these advantages in mind it is not surprising that women carry out suicide attacks in the name of Al Qaeda. The latest development of female suicide bombings started in Iraq in April 2003 under the command of Saddam Hussein’s security forces. A car exploded in this terrorist attack at a U.S. checkpoint in western Iraq, killing three coalition soldiers. The

Arabic TV station Al-Jazeera broadcast separate videotapes of these two female suicide bombers, one of them pregnant, each standing in front of the Iraqi flag, right hand on the Quran placed on a table in front of her and left hand brandishing an automatic rifle. A woman who identified herself as “martyrdom-seeker Nour Qaddour al-Shammari” swore on the holy book of Islam “to defend Iraq . . . and take revenge from the enemies of the (Islamic) nation, Americans, imperialists, Zionists” and Arabs who have submitted to the foreigners. “We say to our leader and holy war comrade, the hero commander Saddam Hussein, that you have sisters that you and history will boast about,” said the woman, who wore the red-checked *keffiyeh*, an Arab headscarf. In a separate video, another woman, who identified herself as Wadad Jamil Jassem, stood in a similar pose and declared “I have devoted myself for Jihad for the sake of God and against the American, British and Israeli infidels and to defend the soil of our precious and dear country.” The videotapes were similar to those distributed by Palestinian suicide bombers after attacks against Israelis.<sup>26</sup>

In September 2003, 2 14-year-old girls named Imame and Sana Laghriff were arrested in Rabat/Marocco and sentenced for terrorist offenses. According to various reports, the two were on their way to target a liquor store, with some sources suggesting this was a suicide attack plot. The teenagers were influenced by a branch of radical Islam advocates from a Salafia Jihadia cell.<sup>27</sup> It seems that these teenagers were highly manipulated by the male members of the cell.

While there is little known about the other women and the intentions of their suicide attacks, the story of the 19-year-old Uzbek women Dilnoza Holmuradova, who detonated explosives strapped to her body at the Tashkent’s Choru Market in March 2004, killing 47 people, illustrates her determination to participate in a suicide attack. Dilnoza came from a middle-class family and was an educated computer programmer and enrolled at the Tashkent police academy in 2001. She was able to speak five languages. In 2002 she began studying Islam with her elder sister and both were greatly influenced by a meeting they had with teachers of the religion. They stopped wearing modern clothes, listening to music, and watching television. In January 2004, the sisters left their home with just two dresses and all the Islamic literature they had. Both never returned.<sup>28</sup> It is unclear when they were recruited by the Islamic Jihad Group, a radical offshoot of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

May 2005 was the first time women were directly involved in a terrorist attack in Egypt. Two women were involved in a shooting on a tourist bus. Both of the women were in their 20s and were related to the male perpetrator, Ihab Yassin. Negat Yassin was the suicide bomber’s sister and Iman Ibrahim Khamis his fiancée. Both women shot themselves before they could be arrested. It remains unclear if the two women intended to commit suicide or chose the tactic to evade arrest by Egyptian police. The Abdallah-Azzam Brigades, an Al Qaeda–affiliated group, declared responsibility for the attack.<sup>29</sup> The Al Qaeda–affiliated Malik Suicidal Brigades claimed responsibility for the suicide attack carried out by a women on 28 September 2005 in Talafa in northern Iraq against a U.S. military recruitment center with the statement: “A blessed sister (· · ·) carried out a heroic attack defending her faith (· · ·) May God accept our sister among the martyrs.”<sup>30</sup> An Internet posting by Al Qaeda in Iraq, which was controlled by Abu Musab Zarqawi, said the bomber attacked the center because it was a gathering spot “of converted volunteers.” Residents said the building used to be an Iraqi army recruiting center.<sup>31</sup> The attack seems to represent a new tactic by the terrorist groups in Iraq to use women, who are rarely searched at the Tall Afar checkpoints due to religious and social traditions that grant women special treatment. That women have until this day not been suspected by the security forces is demonstrated by the fact that the

woman who carried out the attack was dressed in men's clothing, a factor that did not lead the soldiers to pay attention to her.

On 9 November 2005 three Iraqi suicide bombers carried out attacks in Amman, Jordan in the lobby of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, at a wedding party at the Radisson SAS Hotel down the street, and at the Days Inn. They killed 56 people, severely injuring 93. The Jordanian security services were able to arrest Sajida Mubarark al-Rishawi. The 35-year-old Iraqi woman was the fourth suicide bomber but her belt's trigger cord failed and she fled the wedding reception at the Radisson. Her husband, Ali Hussein al-Shumari, also part of the suicide squad, killed himself in the bombing.<sup>32</sup> Her brother is Mubarak Atrous al Rishawi, a senior aide to Zarqawi in western Iraq, who was killed by U.S. forces two years ago. During her confession, she gave no indication of why she wanted to carry out the attack, saying only that her husband brought her from Iraq to Jordan, showed her how to use the explosives belt and fit it onto her, telling her that it would be used to attack a hotel.<sup>33</sup> The Abu Musab al-Zarqawi group, the Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, took responsibility for the blast.

In November 2006 Muriel Degauque carried out the first European converted Muslim woman suicide attack. She was raised as a Roman Catholic in a suburb near Brussels in Belgium. Ms. Degauque, 38, rammed an explosives-filled vehicle into an American military patrol in the town of Baquba in Iraq on 9 November wounding one American soldier. Her story supports fears among many law enforcement officials and academics that converts of Europe's fastest-growing religion could bring with them a disturbing new aspect in the War on Terror. European women who marry Muslim men are now the largest source of religious conversions in Europe. While a vast majority of those conversions are pro forma gestures for moderately religious in-laws, a small but growing number are women who willingly adopt the conservative compartment of their fundamentalist husbands or support them to follow the radical interpretation of Islam and join a terrorist organization belonging to the movement of Al Qaeda. French antiterrorism officials have been warning for several years that female converts represent a small but increasingly important part of the terrorist threat in Europe.

Ms. Degauque was born in the small suburb of Charleroi, a gritty coal and steel town where her father operated a crane at the sprawling smelter, according to neighbors and friends. Ms. Degauque's parents sent her to the best local high school in the area at the time. Her teachers remember her as a well-dressed, well-behaved young woman, even if she was a middling student. The Belgian Police say she became known as a drug user, although she was never arrested. In her late teens, she followed her older brother in joining a local motorcycle club. By most accounts, Ms. Degauque's wayward streak took a decisive turn when her brother was killed in a motorcycle accident when she was 20. Ms. Degauque said she should have died instead of her brother. Ms. Degauque soon moved out of the house and began a troubled life in Charleroi. She married a much older Turkish man in what neighbors presumed was an arrangement to help him legalize his status in Belgium. They divorced about two years later. Ms. Degauque had several boyfriends after that and worked at the restaurant of one for a while. She eventually met an Algerian man who introduced her to Islam. She began appearing at her parents' home wearing a head scarf. Her mother told neighbors that she was pleased because Islam had helped her daughter stop drinking and doing drugs. But her devotion became disturbing several years later after she met and married Issam Goris, the son of a Belgian man and Moroccan woman. Mr. Goris with his long beard was already known to Belgian Police as a radical Islamist. Ms. Degauque moved with him to Brussels and then to Morocco, where she learned Arabic and studied the Koran. When she returned, she wore not only a head scarf but the full-length robe. As

Ms. Degauque became increasingly rigid, she demanded that her parents follow Islamic customs when she and her husband visited, forbidding her father to drink alcohol or the men and women to eat together.<sup>34</sup>

The Belgian Police now say that Mr. Goris had fallen in with a group of Islamists focused on recruiting European Muslims to fight with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's terrorist network in Iraq. The police had been monitoring the group for months when they intercepted phone calls from Mr. Goris in Iraq indicating that he and his wife were already there. The police say the couple left Belgium by car and eventually entered Iraq from Syria. The Belgians did not yet know Mr. Goris's and Ms. Degauque's identities, but they notified the United States and the Iraqi government that a Belgian couple was in the country intent on carrying out attacks. They turned over information on the telephone calls that would allow the Americans to find Mr. Goris, but Ms. Degauque struck before they did. A day later, the Americans found Mr. Goris, who was also wrapped in explosives, apparently about to carry out an attack. They shot him before he could detonate his charges.<sup>35</sup> Dismantling the network of Bilal Soughir in Belgium that sent them to their death police arrested another couple, Brahim Fahmouti and Zorah Bahssi, allegedly preparing to go to Iraq to become martyrs. In a small town of Riemst, a young Rwandan convert was being pressed to travel to Iraq by her Belgian-convert boyfriend, Pascal Crypennick. Soughir's cell was particularly innovative in its recruitment of women to fight in Iraq. Additionally, the Belgian case had links to the youthful Dutch Hofstad group, a unique mix of extremists' ferocity and modern European attitudes. Abdullah Ali and his wife Cossar Ali are in British police custody, suspected of plotting to bring down several U.S. passenger jets over the Atlantic.

When analyzing these cases, it is difficult to profile female suicide bombers or women who decided to support a terrorist organization in a nonviolent way. What all the female suicide bombers or would-be suicide bombers who acted under the umbrella of Al Qaeda have in common is that they were recruited and instructed by men. In terms of suicide attacks the growing trend of husband-and-wife-weapon-delivery-teams is obvious. It could also be stated that the instance of female suicide bombers has increased over a relatively short period of time.

Other findings also support the observation that the involvement of women in terrorist operations is an emerging trend. Already in 2003, several factors led the FBI to prepare for the possibility that Al Qaeda might recruit women. Recent findings have the FBI concerned that Al Qaeda may be recruiting and training women to carry out terror attacks, trying to regain an element of surprise for a network that has been thinned out by arrests.<sup>36</sup>

In March 2003, Al Qaeda reported the establishment of a women's suicide division that is being led by a woman named Umm Osama (the mother of Osama), a reference to Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. In an online interview to the London based *A-Sharq Al Awsat* daily on 12 March Umm Osama claimed that the unit trains women in suicide attacks "The idea gathered interests after female suicide missions in Palestine and Chechnya. (...) We are willing to take any Muslim woman and we have Chechens, Afghans, and Arabs from all countries. We are preparing to carry out operations as our predecessors did in Palestine and Chechnya. (...) As a network and organization, we rely on the Internet for widest distribution."<sup>37</sup> Even when there are many reasons to have suspicions about this interview, in June 2003 the FBI started searching for a woman for the first time since the War on Terror began, the 31-year-old Aafia Siddiqui.<sup>38</sup> Along with her husband, the MIT alumnus founded the Institute for Islamic Research and Teaching in 1999 and both were identified as suspected Al Qaeda agents. An additional indicator that the position of women is transforming is demonstrated by the warrant for a Tunisian woman named Bentiwaa Farida Ben Bechir. As a member of a cell in Italy, she was active in recruiting

suicide bombers to be sent to Iraq.<sup>39</sup> As early as May 2003, France's famed antiterrorist investigating judge, Jean-Louis Bruguière, warned that European terrorist networks were trying to recruit Caucasian women to handle terrorist logistics because they would be less likely to raise suspicion. On 3 November 2005, the Dutch police arrested 21-year-old Soumaya Sahla in Rijswijk on suspicion of being involved in terrorist activities of the Islamist radical group Hofstad.<sup>40</sup> At the time of the arrestment she was on her way, together with her husband, to kill a Dutch legislator, a very prominent Islam-critical feminist Ayaan Hirsi Ali. The driver who had brought both to the train station, van der Oeven, was also a woman. She is a convert with cherubic Dutch looks and her former profession was policewoman.<sup>41</sup> The women of the Dutch extremist network were a new breed of holy warriors on the front lines where Islam and the West collide. In the male-dominated world of Islamic extremism, they saw themselves as full-fledged partners in jihad. The story of the 14-member Dutch network reveals the increasing aggressiveness and prominence of female extremists in Europe. In a chilling trend in the Netherlands and Belgium, police are investigating militants' wives suspected of plotting suicide attacks with their husbands—or on their own. It looks like that the primary motivation of the women was/is to carry out a political act and that they did/do not follow their husbands blindly. Female converts grew up with the understanding of equal rights and for them it is easier once they have made the commitment to the radical ideology to become active.

### Sisterhoods and the Global Salafi Jihad

The roles of women in the movement of the global Salafi Jihad are much more multifaceted. Carrying out suicide attacks played until today an under part role in this terrorist movement for women who follow the ideology of Al Qaeda, but in contrast they function as operational facilitators, supporting their male relatives, and as ideological educators of their children and this should not be underrated. While the majority of Al Qaeda's women operate invisibly for the public audience they have a strong impact on the current and next generation of terrorists. In order to understand their role, it is fruitful to start with an analysis of Osama bin Laden's *fatawa* and other publications made by followers of the ideology. Afterward, the concepts of sisterhood and of the female Jihad will be analyzed.

Until today, six *fatawa* have been identified who are allowing women to participate in martyrdom operations. The first one was issued by Yussuf al Qaradawi, three by the faculty at al-Azhar University Egypt, Faysal al-Mawlawi of the European Council for Research and Legal Opinion based in Dublin, and Nizar Ábd al-Qadir Riyyam of the Islamic University of Gaza.<sup>42</sup> David Cook notes that it is significant that the more conservative Jordanian, Syrian, and Saudi religious leaders are completely absent from this list. "One can see that the question of women participating in suicide attacks has become associated with the Egyptian–Palestinian and consequently more progressive side of the Muslim world."<sup>43</sup>

But the ideology of the global Salafi Jihad has different functions for the women in mind than the one of a suicide bomber. The *fatawa* and some audiotapes of bin Laden express the role of women very clearly. In the fatwa "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places, Expel the Mushrikeen (infidels) from the Arabian Peninsula" bin Laden explains that women are playing an essential role as supporters, facilitators, and promoters in carrying out the Jihad. "Our women had set a tremendous example for generosity in the cause of Allah; they motivate and encourage their sons, brothers and husbands to fight for the cause of Allah in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnya and in other countries. (· · ·) May Allah strengthen the

belief—Imaan—of our women in the way of generosity and sacrifice for the supremacy of the word of Allah. (· · ·) Our women instigate their brothers to fight in the cause of Allah. (· · ·) Our women encourage Jihad saying: Prepare yourself like a struggler; the matter is bigger than the words.” However, in the fatwa “Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders, World Islamic Front” published in the year 1998, which became the manifesto of the full-fledged global Salafi Jihad, the role of women seems to be alleviated. They are mentioned once and then just addressed as being the victims of the United States and the Zionists. “(· · ·) women and children, whose cry is: Our Lord, rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from thee one who will help!”

In the pledge of a training manual found by the Manchester Metropolitan Police during the search of an Al Qaeda member’s home, women are also addressed as victims of the infidels: “To the sister believer whose clothes the criminals have stripped off. To the sister believer whose hair the oppressors have shaved. To the sister believer who’s body has been abused by the human dogs.” The ideology of the global Salafi Jihad says that a reason to carry out the defensive Jihad is when a Muslim woman is held by the *kufar* (infidels), to ensure her freedom is *fard* (duty) upon the whole Muslim *ummah* (world Muslim community). But the women are also addressed as supporters “Covenant, O Sister (· · ·) To make them desire death and hate appointments and prestige.” and perpetrators “Covenant, O Sister (· · ·) to slaughter them like lamb and let the Nile, al-Asi, and Euphrates river flow with their blood.”

In an audiotape broadcast on Saturday 18 October 2003 by Al Jazeera, bin Laden said: “Our prudent Muslim women are also expected to play their role.”

A recently found document, “The role of women in the Jihad against Enemies”<sup>44</sup> on a Jihadist message board written by Yussuf al-Ayyiri, who was one of the ideological leaders of the Saudi Arabian branch of Al Qaeda,<sup>45</sup> encourages women to take an active role in Jihad. This role does not involve active fighting, but it calls for women to encourage and support men in their active quest to join the Jihad. While explicitly stating that women should not actively engage in physical combat, the document emphasizes the power that women hold over men, reminding them that their role in Jihad is a vital necessity for the entire Muslim *ummah*. “The reason we address women (· · ·) is our observation that when a woman is convinced of something, no one will spur a man to fulfil it like she will. (· · ·) The saying behind every great man stands a women was true for Muslim women at these times, behind every great Mujahid stood a women (· · ·)”<sup>46</sup> He focuses on women as fighters, rather than in a supportive role but he avoids making the revolutionary call of women to join in suicide operations. In the final paragraph he destroys two of the principal blocks against women actually fighting jihad: that they would need the permission of their parents and that women’s Jihad is the performance on the *hajj*<sup>47</sup> ritual. As for the idea that the *hajj* supercedes Jihad he cites a tradition that enumerates the importance of various activities, and lists them in the following order: prayer, Jihad, and respect toward parents. “With these two comments he has laid the intellectual ground for the full participation of women in Jihad among radical Muslims.”<sup>48</sup>

The online periodical *al-Khansaa*, published in 2004, which is addressed to women who share the ideology of Al Qaeda, also shows very obviously the importance of female support. This magazine says it is published by an organization called Women’s Information Bureau of-Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and claims that Abdul al-Murqrin, the leader of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Issa Saad Mohammed bin Oushan are among the founders.<sup>49</sup> Al-Khansaa bint Omar was a poetess of the pre-Islamic period who converted to Islam during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, and she is considered “the mother of the Shahids.” When her four sons died in the battle of al-Qadissiya, she did not mourn

but thanked Allah for honoring her with their death. It was already mentioned that this archetypal picture of a mother of Shahids also exists in Palestinian society. The choice of the name *al-Khansaa* for the magazine was not without reason. The magazine aims to motivate women to participate in Jihad by bringing up their children to be good Jihadis and by being supportive of their husbands, brothers, and sons. The magazine indoctrinates that the goal of the woman is also to become a Shahid. An editorial in the magazine states: “(· · ·) we love Allah and his Messenger. We march in a single path, the path of Jihad for the sake of Allah, and our goal is Shahada for the sake of Allah, and our goal is (to gain) the pleasure of Allah and His Paradise.”<sup>50</sup> The perception of the women is that they are standing shoulder to shoulder with their men, supporting them, helping them, and backing them up. An article titled “Obstacles in the Path of the Jihad Warrior Woman” written by Umm Badr included indoctrination and guidelines for the women. “My noble sisters (· · ·). The woman in the family is a mother, wife, sister and daughter. In society she is an educator, propagator and preacher of Islam, and a female jihad warrior.”<sup>51</sup> Mohamed Salah states that “What is new here is the use of the medium of the Internet to recruit women.”<sup>52</sup> It has to be mentioned at this point that the whole ideology of the global Salafi Jihad is to build a revival of the golden Age, which took place in the few years between 632 and 661. For that reason, it is not surprising that the argumentation for the role of women also derives from history. “My sister you might hear these stories and think that they have been fabricated (· · ·) but once you will learn that even today there are women similar to those of the past, you will believe the stories about (the women in) the past.”<sup>53</sup> For centuries, Muslim women in different struggles and communities have joined men on the front lines of war, and have died alongside them. The most prominent example of an early Muslim in Jihad in Nusayba bint Káb, who fought in the Battle of Uhud with her husband and two sons and during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr. She joined the Muslim troops, suffered eleven wounds, and lost one arm.<sup>54</sup> The Prophet’s own female relatives took part in Jihad. His wife Ayesha led the Battle of the Camel, and his granddaughter Zaynab bint Al fought in the Battle of Karbala. Other women were recognized for tending to the wounded, donating their jewelery for the Jihad, and encouraging their male family members to fight to ensure the survival of Islam.<sup>55</sup> The involvement of the early Arab women in Jihad is celebrated today throughout the Muslim world and they serve as icons and a precedent for the contemporary Muslim women who choose suicide operations, who have lost a family member in Jihad, or who support the ideology.

In the past, a Muslim woman was seen as the responsibility of her male relatives. Militant organizations could not recruit women directly without transgressing familial and societal honor codes that require women to seek permission for every action they take outside the family home. To secretly recruit a woman as a suicide bomber or even as a courier of messages and weapons would be seen as an insult to the family’s male honor. Increasingly, this seems to be changing, evident by the *al-Khansaa* article saying that women need not ask for permission to become a Jihadi, as it is their duty to do so. In fact, *al-Khansaa* exploits the woman’s traditional role in family and society as mother and nurturer of her children to get women to play a larger role in the Jihad.

The women who share the ideology of the global Salafi Jihad are organized in so-called Sisterhoods. The radical Islamic Sisterhoods today have their ideological roots in the Egypt-Syria Muslim Sisterhood. This concept is not a new phenomenon and is analogous to the concept of the Brotherhood. The Sisterhoods first emerged at the same time the Muslim Brotherhood was formed by Hassan al Banna in 1928. But according to the role of women in Muslim society, which is restricted to the private sphere, the Sisterhoods have never reached the same level of publicity that their male counterparts have. The members

of Sisterhoods are sisters in belief and they meet each other in their private homes or on certain platforms on the Internet. Sonja B. a German was arrested after she asked in a famous and well know Internet chat room of the Turkish website “mucadele” if it will be allowed if she would carry out an attack with her baby in Iraq. She was at this time in contact with members of Ansar al-Islam in South Germany and Austria. In total 47 women mentioned interest to participate in a terrorist plot in the mentioned chat room. Two-thirds of them came from Germany the others from Denmark and Belgium.<sup>56</sup> Also, the Muriel Degauque was in earlier times active in the mentioned chat room. At this point it has to be noted that dozens of forums and chat rooms exist where radical women exchange their views. It also has to be noted that not all Sisterhoods follow a radical interpretation of Islam. The radical sisters in belief do not only greet each other, spend time socializing, give gifts during special occasions, cook for those who have a new baby. This is only the surface level of Sisterhood. This special relationship goes much deeper than that to the level of the heart from which the bonds of Sisterhood emanate. The sisters describe this level as a unique type of love. “It is a feeling that is particularly extraordinary for those of us who are revert/converts to Islam. To really enjoy the beauty of this bond we need to completely comprehend the elements that are involved”<sup>57</sup>

A little understanding of the relationship between the members of the sisterhoods is provided by an al-Tawheed<sup>58</sup> -aligned website for women. Surrounded by pink roses, this website calls for supporting the “Boycott Israel Campaign” with the words: “My brothers and sisters let us stand, and fight together without fears. (. . .) Pick up your rifles and set up your tanks, and with our people together we will fight. This war is for our land and is not a prank, so be ready for war with all your might”<sup>59</sup> Extremist Islamist websites are generous with advices on how women can and should participate in the Jihad. There are many suggestions on how they should bring up children to be good Shahids and what books they should read to their children to make them devout Muslims and brave fighters. These websites provide advice on how mothers, wives, and sisters of Jihadi fighters should be supportive of their husbands’ decision to become a Shahid and how they should provide food, shelter, and care for all Shahids. That women must sacrifice their sons and husbands is a recurrent theme of much Jihadi literature.

Radical Sisterhoods can be found nearly everywhere in Europe. At the current stage of research, the women in Germany seem to be more tightly organized than in other European countries. The influence of the German converts might be responsible for this issue. The mentioned hierarchally organized Sisterhood in Germany conducts three different kinds of meetings on a regular basis: (1) *Subhiya*: Breakfast meeting, (2) *Istiybal*: To this Reception a bigger radius of participants are invited, and (3) *Dschahnnyya*, the purpose of this meeting is fund-raising and distribution of money. Some of the sisterhoods have the character of study circles. The topics that are discussed are how to persuade the husband to follow the “right” belief, how to educate the children, talk about ideological issues, and advice to one another about what answers should be given to governmental institutions. The key question is what these women have to gain by carrying out the female Jihad. This behavior cannot be explained rationally because when they carry out the female Jihad properly, their husband carries out a suicide attack and they lose their family income and with that the guarantee for the survival of their children. The first thing they gain is that they follow the ideology and second thing they gain is power over their husband and children. When they lose their husband as the provider of the family, the terrorist organization takes care of these women and their children. Malika Aroud is a textbook case of how a woman brought up in the West can be drawn into Al Qaeda’s ambit, and her story is telling us how women jihadis were both gaining acceptance in the radical world and goading men on, not to be outdone themselves.

Aroud is a Moroccan–Belgium woman, plunged into radicalism after a rebellious youth of drinking and clubbing. She married a Tunisian–Belgian fundamentalist who was killed by the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan after he assassinated its leader, Ahmed Shah Massoud, two days prior to the 9/11 attacks, on orders from Osama bin Laden. After returning from Afghanistan, living in Switzerland, she expressed a deep love of Osama bin Laden.<sup>60</sup> She has published a book “Soldiers of Light” and she is running a very aggressive website, minbar.sos. Today she lives in Belgium with her new husband, a Tunisian named Moez Garsalloui whom she gently bosses around. The next question that arises is how the women in these male-dominated societies persuade their husbands to follow the ideology. They use the very common permanent psychological exercise of praising and frustrating their husbands and children. After manipulating them in this way over a longer period of time, their husbands and children will nearly do everything to get praise from them. To guarantee that the son will still follow the word of his mother and that the mother continues to be the only true love in his life, even after he has married, she selects a wife for him that he is unlikely to fall in love with. Having chosen such a wife for him, she remains the most important woman in his life. This behavior is the knowledge they teach each other in the sisterhoods. A very prominent example is Abu Musab Zarqawi. When he was arrested in Jordan he wrote intense heart-breaking love letters not to his wife or a girlfriend; they were addressed to his mother.

While some members are well-educated, have Internet access, and are able to write more or less fluently the national language or English, others are only able to use their mother tongue and have no education. Some of the sisters in belief have converted to the Salafi ideology after their immigration; this seems to be similar to the members of the Hamburg 9/11 cell who turned to the ideology of the global Salafi Jihad after they immigrated to Germany. Some of the members have radicalized themselves by studying the ideological pamphlets and websites of the movements. This behavior was also visible by the cell that has carried out the attacks in London in July 2005. Indeed, in some respects, females are considered to be the most effective and loyal supporters of terrorist organizations. Members of the sisterhood are usually recruited by other females, especially relatives. It is not surprising that in the same house Malika Aroud used to live in Switzerland, a Muslim women organization was also holding office space. The sisters often skilfully exploit a traditional moral prohibition of their persecution by men. When analyzing the females and their role in the Islamic organization Hizb ut-Tahrir in Uzbekistan, an identical finding can be made. They perceived the *hijab* (Veil) not as repression, but as an act of liberation and faith that endows a female Muslim’s life with honor, an aura of respect and dignity. It is also a symbol of power over their husbands as being a good Muslima who follows the “true” Islam. Their self-understanding is that the women are the other half of one pair.

There is no assurance that every sisterhood belongs to certain organizations of the global Salafi Jihad. There is also no assurance that the women who were involved in suicide attacks of the global Salafi Jihad in Morocco, Egypt, Uzbekistan, Iraq, and Jordan have been members of a sisterhood.

When reviewing the data, it appears that the role of women in supporting male relatives and educating children in the ideology of the global Salafi Jihad plays a more important role in the short and long term survival of the Al Qaeda affiliates than that of suicide bombing. At this point it is fruitful to go back to this understanding of roles. In order to gain a deeper understanding of how deeply rooted and established the ideology in the Arab countries is, it is worth analyzing the school education of girls in places like Herat, Kabul, and Peshawar. The girls at these institutions are educated in radical anti-American and anti-Israel ideology from their first day of school. The pupils learn in some religious girls’ schools in Peshawar

she said that her pupils learn that their life is the female way of a Shahid. Having 8, 10, or 12 children and educating them to become a Shahid is the Jihad of a mother. The girls in these schools start every day with songs praising the glory of being a Shahid and by stepping on the flags of Israel and the United States Mothers at these places were eager to communicate that the greatest honor for them would be if their sons would carry out a suicide attack one day when they are grown up.

These observations are strong indicators that women are following in the ideology of the global Salafi Jihad, a gender-specific interpretation of the Jihad. The concept of female Jihad signifies that the women carry out the Jihad by educating, supporting, and encouraging their sons, brothers, and husbands. To reach this goal, they have to prepare themselves as a struggler. No less important for promoting the Salafi ideology is their role as the victims of the infidels in motivating their male relatives to carry out the Jihad. These women do not seek the male's honor (*sharaf*) because they will never really achieve it. They seek and are bound by the female honor (*ird* = pelvis). The honor of these women comes from their pelvis. For them, their way of Jihad is defective when it is carried out in the manner of male Jihad. Bearing arms in direct conflict with the enemy and carrying out suicide attacks is the Jihad of men. Women follow their own interpretation of Jihad. When a woman uses this male version of Jihad, this perception is contrary to the truth. "A Muslim woman is a female Jihad warrior always and everywhere. She is a female Jihad warrior who wages Jihad by means of funding Jihad. She wages Jihad by means of waiting for her Jihad warrior husband, and when she educates her children to that which Allah loves. She wages jihad when she supports Jihad (and) when she calls for jihad in word, deed, belief, and prayer." When a woman enters paradise, she will not find 72 male virgins waiting for her; she will sit beside her husband. A different interpretation says that the female martyr of the Shahida is one of the 72 virgins who are waiting for a male martyr. In the Shi'it and Sunni tradition, the word Jihad is completely reinterpreted for the women; they might gain similar spiritual benefit for performing it, but the action performed is without topical connection to fighting.<sup>61</sup>

Marc Sageman discovered that 70 percent of the 400 terrorist he analyzed had been married. Every terrorist has a mother and many of them at least one sister. Arranged marriages are a strong tradition in the Muslim world and it would not be a mistake to assume that marriages in the global Salafi Jihad world are not arranged by accident. How intensive the women carry out the female Jihad is easy to see when analyzing the Al Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah. Sidney Jones from the International Crisis Group in Jakarta states that marriage alliances are the glue that holds Jemaah Islamiyah together. "Oftentimes senior members of the organization will offer their sisters or sisters-in-law to new promising recruits so that they are not only drawn into the organization, but into the family as well." The result is that the members are much closer connected. In some cases they even had control of finances. They play a role as couriers in ensuring that, particularly after imprisonment, communication among different members of the organization is maintained. "(· · ·) It's not a role in actively talking part in bombing activities, the new way some of the women in Chechnya or in Sri Lanka have done. It's more ensuring that the organization stays solid."<sup>62</sup> The wife of the operational chief of the Jemaah Islamiyah, Hambali,<sup>63</sup> who was responsible for instance for the October 2002 Bali Bombings, acted as his bookkeeper. The wife of Omar al-Faruk, also a key figure of the Jemaah Islamiyah, translated and also acted as his bookkeeper. Both women played a crucial role in the financing of the organization, as did Yazid Sufaat's wife.

Women are often strongly involved in the financial issues of a terrorist organization. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks the United States has closed several bank

accounts of terrorist organizations or supporting institutions that were handled by women.

The chance that the men get arrested or die in combat or in an attack is much higher so for the organization it makes sense that persons take care for the financial issues whose availability is more granted. Dealing with the financial aspects could be done from home where the women are restricted in these societies.

## **Conclusion**

Over the past four years, religious terrorist groups have set the stage for the entry of female combatants. Findings of other female terrorism as in Chechnya, Sri Lanka, and Palestine can not generally transfer to the attacks carried out by Al Qaeda. Female insight terrorist organizations have to be analyzed in the specific cultural and political context and too few Al Qaeda terrorist attacks with female involvement have been carried out to build a profile. Al Qaeda's female terrorism is on a formative stage but it is on the rise. The major roles women play in this movement are as facilitators, supporters, and educators. It is very difficult to profile female suicide bombers or female facilitators and supporters, as they come from diverse educational, religious, social, and personal backgrounds. It seems to be that the majority of the sisters in Western countries converted to the Salafi ideology after they immigrated; or they converted to Islam and then decided to follow the radical ideology on the other hand, other sisters are born into this ideology and were subjected to indoctrination since infancy. Others have had a traumatic experience with the "enemy" that has arrested, killed, or tortured one of their male relatives. Still others have radicalized themselves in the course of searching for their identity. Some have an unstable personality and simply blindly followed a male relative. Some are rebelling against a society in which they feel they do not belong. Some are searching through a radical ideology like the Salafi Jihad for a sense of solidarity. Presumably, that there are a number of motivations that are interrelated. Similar multifaceted motivations can be founded analyzing the females who have carried out a suicide attack. The development of the women in the movement of Al Qaeda can be systematized in three waves. The first wave took place 10 years ago when such women married to Europe's militant Islamists followed their husbands to Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. The second one when the women started support their male relatives to follow the "right" interpretation of Islam, facilitate the operational work of the organization, and are getting organized in Sisterhoods. While the second wave continues to grow, the opening of the third wave was done by the suicide attacks of Sajida Mubaraark al-Rishawi, Dilnoza Holmuradova, and Muriel Degauque.

Terrorism is not just a male issue; it is also a female issue. The difference is that the majority of radical Islamic women follow the female Jihad and that this interpretation of the Jihad is no less dangerous than the male interpretation, which means bearing arms and carrying out attacks. The female Jihad signifies that women have a strong impact on the current and next generation of terrorists by supporting their husbands and brothers, facilitating the organizations and terrorist attacks and educating their children to follow the ideology.

A growing number of female suicide bombers can be observed mostly embedded in a husband-and-wife-weapon-delivery-team programmed to carry out a one-way mission and it can be assumed that this number will continue to increase in the near future. Terrorist organizations use women as suicide bombers because they provide many considerable advantages. First, they provide a tactical advantage: stealthier attack, an element of surprise, hesitancy to search for women, and the stereotype of females as being nonviolent.

Second, the inclusion of women as suicide bombers increases the number of combatants. Third, this increases the publicity of an attack and, finally, this bears a much greater psychological impact. Suicide bombers provide a low-cost, low-technology, low-risk weapon that maximizes target destruction and instills fear—women are even more effective with their increased accessibility and media shock value. Even when classical Islamic sources are fairly negative about the role of women in jihad it is equally clear that radical Muslims have been attempting to legitimize women's participation in Jihad. Six *fatawa* who justify the female suicide attacks already exist. Personal and organizational motivations converge to produce an increased number of female terrorists. The legal issues raised here are too recent for the outsider to know whether this revolutionary change in Jihad will be accepted by a larger radical Muslim community. However, it is also clear that the radicals have been able to establish a fairly strong ideological basis for the women joining the male's interpretation of the Jihad. To the extent that these motivations persist over time, the increase in female participation in religious terrorist organizations can be expected to continue.

Facing the national counterterrorism programs there is a need to understand the role of bin Laden's roses as operational facilitators, organizational and personal supporters, and ideological educators in order to develop long-term effective and efficient counterterrorism. Following the argument that successful counterterrorism should address both the motivation and the operational capabilities of a terrorist organization, there is an essential need for the national security forces to look more carefully at women.

## Notes

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2. Yoram Schweitzer, "Female Suicide Bombers for God," *Telavivnotes*, No. 88, 9 October 2003, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, available at (<http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/tanotes/TAUnotes88.doc>), accessed 5 November 2005.

3. Rhiannon Talbot "The Unexpected Face of Terrorism," *This is the North East*, available at ([http://www.thisisthenortheast.co.uk/the\\_north\\_east/news/attack/310102\\_3.html](http://www.thisisthenortheast.co.uk/the_north_east/news/attack/310102_3.html)), accessed 2 November 2005.

4. Karla J. Cunningham, "Cross-Regional Trends in Female Terrorism." *Studies of Conflict and Terrorism* 26 (2003), p. 172.

5. See also Cunningham (note 9).

6. The German terrorist organization RAF uses women for its operations but this group is by its origin and its ideology very different than other terrorism organizations and for that reason the RAF will be not analyzed in this article.

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8. The Israeli Security Agency recently exposed a network of women who filled key Palestinian Islamic Jihad posts in Judea. Some of them participated in its terrorist logistics and financial support systems. They received funds from PIJ headquarters in Syria for terrorist operatives in Judea, Jerusalem, and Ramallah. *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies*, 9 November 2006, available at (<http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/>).

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14. Luisella DeCataldo Neuburger and Tiziana Valentini, *Women and Terrorism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. 91.
15. Cunningham, "Cross-Regional Trends," (note 9), p. 180.
16. Vidyamali Samaranghe, "Soldiers, Housewives and Peace Makers: Ethnic Conflict and Gender," *Sri Lanka, Ethnic Studies Report XIV*(2) (July 1996), p. 211.
17. Cunningham, "Cross-Regional Trends," (note 9), p. 175.
18. Martha Crenshaw "The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behaviour as a Product of a Strategic Choice." In *Origins of Terrorism*, ed. Walter Reich (Washington, D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 1990), pp. 7-8.
19. Cunningham, "Cross-Regional Trends," (note 9), p. 172.
20. Rhiannon Talbot, "Myths in the Representation of Women Terrorists," *Eire-Ireland*, 35(3-4) (Fall-Winter 2000), p. 180.
21. A full exploration of this topic, however, is well beyond the scope of this article. For further analyses, see Victor (note 15), pp. 96-115; Mia Bloom, "Feminism, Rape and War: *Engendering Suicide Terror?*" *Dying to Kill: The Global Phenomenon of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 197-201.
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