



IRANIAN WOMEN'S MAGAZINE SHUT DOWN FOR PUBLISHING INVESTIGATIVE ARTICLE ON MARTYRDOM MOVEMENT

By M. Nissimov, Y. Mansharof and A. Savyon*
Inquiry & Analysis # 439 | May 2008

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Published in 2008 in the United States of America by
The Middle East Media Research Institute,
P.O. Box 27837, Washington, D.C., 20038-7837
www.memri.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
The Inculcation of the Martyrdom Culture under Ahmadinejad	4
Suicide Operations as an Element of Iran’s Security Strategy	5
“Dying in Order to Kill”	5
“Iran and the [Palestinian] Intifada”	8
“For and Against Martyrdom Operations”	8
“The Politicians’ Silence about the Martyrdom Seekers”	9
“Zahra’s Last Testament”	9
“The Martyrs of the Mine Fields”	9

INTRODUCTION

In late January 2008, the Media Supervision Committee of Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance ordered the closure of the women's movement monthly *Zanan*, which had appeared in Iran for 16 years. The order came after the magazine published an investigative article on *istishhad* (i.e. martyrdom) operations. The conservative news agency Fars reported, citing a knowledgeable source, that the magazine had been shut down for "breaking the law and defaming military and revolutionary institutions, including the Basij," and for "publishing reports and [raising] issues that undermine [society's] spiritual security, morale, and ideological strength, and that create a sense of insecurity in society and discredit the status of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran."¹

The *Zanan* article in question dealt with the Iranian "martyrdom movement," which has been registering Iranian men and women for suicide operations and training some to carry out these operations. *Zanan* focused on the women volunteers, quoting Firooz Rajai-Far, a leader of the martyrdom movement and secretary-general of the World Islamic Organization Headquarters for Remembering the Shahids, as stating that some 20,000 women have already signed up for martyrdom operations, constituting a third of the volunteers. Rajai-Far stated that because martyrdom was a "religious duty," women did not require the permission of their fathers, their husbands, or "even of the ruling jurisprudent" – currently Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei – to volunteer for martyrdom operations. She also stated that she approved of sending even seven-year-old children on suicide missions during a war. Rajai-Far herself has signed up for martyrdom operations, and has threatened the U.S. with suicide operations against its interests in the Gulf.²

In addition to presenting interviews with Rajai-Far and with women martyrdom-seekers, the article also described the controversy among religious scholars, clerics, and experts in Iran regarding martyrdom operations.

THE INCULCATION OF THE MARTYRDOM CULTURE UNDER AHMADINEJAD

The Iranian regime has tried to present the martyrdom movement as a voluntary enterprise independent of the state. However, the presence of Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) representatives at the movement's registration ceremonies suggests that it is endorsed by the regime.³ This assumption is further supported by the 2004 statement by Mohammad Ali Samed, spokesman of the World Islamic Organization Headquarters for Remembering the *Shahids*, that

"the martyrdom [operations] will begin only at the order of [Iranian Supreme] Leader [Khamenei]."⁴ In a May 2008 speech to families of *shahids*, Khamenei characterized martyrdom as "a source of pride" and as "sacrifice in the path of God" which "gladdens [the heart of] God."⁵

Moreover, martyrdom is a value personally endorsed and promoted by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and also by the official Iranian media, which stresses the importance of inculcating the "culture of martyrdom" in society. In a speech at a January 2008 Basij conference, Ahmadinejad stated that "today, more than ever, we must inculcate in the younger generation the culture of *shahada* [martyrdom]. This is a mission of supreme ideological [importance]... One who treads the path of martyrdom and brings himself to this extreme attains the pinnacle of human [achievement]. It is a duty incumbent upon [each member of] the public to bring himself, as well as others, to this pinnacle..."

In the speech, Ahmadinejad called martyrdom "the greatest legacy and future source [of power] of the Iranian people," adding that "a society in which each and every individual is willing to sacrifice himself for the goals and values of divine purity, or for the sake of the culture of martyrdom, is a constructive, dynamic, and in fact unique society."⁶

In a July 2005 speech, Ahmadinejad asked: "Is there an art more beautiful, more divine, and more eternal than the art of martyrdom? A nation with martyrdom knows no captivity. Those who wish to undermine this principle undermine the foundations of our independence and national security. They undermine the foundation of our eternity."⁷

The value of martyrdom is also stressed by regime heads in their speeches. For example, at a February 2008 convention of IRGC clerics, Mohsen Mojtahed Shabestari, Khamenei's representative in East Azerbaijan, underscored the importance that the regime attributes to it, saying: "The clerics' most important mission is to preserve the spirit of martyrdom and to strengthen religious faith within society."⁸

A similar point was made in an editorial titled "Iran's Trump Cards against America" in the weekly *Parto-ye Sokhan*, affiliated with Ahmadinejad's mentor Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah-e Yazdi: "[Iran's] most effective deterrent against an attack is the army's and the nation's belief in martyrdom and in immortality [through] death for the sake of God. This [belief] eliminates all fear, and deters the enemy [i.e. the U.S.] from attacking Iran."⁹ It should be stressed that, in a July 2005 speech, Ayatollah Mesbah-e Yazdi himself called on the Iranian public to sign up for suicide operations against the U.S. and other "enemies of Islam."¹⁰

Iran's state-sponsored TV channels frequently air programs conveying messages of martyrdom. See, for example, MEMRI Clip No. 917, "Bridegroom Turns Suicide Bomber in Iranian

Music Video”) <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/917.htm>).¹¹



Images from “Bridgroom Turns Suicide Bomber In Iranian Music Video”

SUICIDE OPERATIONS AS AN ELEMENT OF IRAN’S SECURITY STRATEGY

Suicide operations form an integral part of Iran’s security doctrine.¹² This is evident from an October 2007 interview with IRGC deputy naval commander Ali Fadavi, in which

he emphasized the significance, attributed to these operations by the regime, and described the close collaboration between the IRGC and the Basij in this area. Fadavi said: “Even small operations can greatly impact the strategic Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz... It is not the number of Basij soldiers that counts in realizing this plan, but their quality – because each one is capable of doing excellent work as a martyr... The Basij forces are still seeking martyrdom, and now this spirit is prevailing throughout the IRGC... If necessary, we will take advantage of [this willingness] for self-sacrifice... The IRGC and the Basij forces have begun to collaborate closely, and the fruit of these plans will be visible [to all] when the enemies become so stupid as to start posing an actual threat to Iran.”¹³

In early May 2008, IRGC Naval Commander Morteza Saffari said, “The existence of threats [against Iran] is [actually] a blessing for us... When the enemy threatens us with a [military] attack, we revive our culture of jihad and martyrdom [and] reinforce it, and our young people enhance their readiness, preparing themselves for [martyrdom operations]... The essence of the culture of jihad and martyrdom is [the ability] to create people who are actually willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of God.”¹⁴

“DYING IN ORDER TO KILL”

The following are excerpts from the *Zanan* article on women in the martyrdom movement, titled “Dying in Order to Kill,” which was published in the January 2008 issue of *Zanan*, and on the magazine’s website.¹⁵



The cover of the *Zanan* issue in which the article appeared

“A Thursday afternoon. The Behesht-e Zahara Cemetery in Tehran is very busy. We know only that the ceremony of the martyrdom-seekers [*istishhadiyoun*] is [supposed to] take place behind the martyrs’ plot. Almost none of the passers-by know where that is. Many of them do not even know the meaning of the word *istishhad* [martyrdom]. Nearby,... behind Plot No. 26 – which contains those who fell in the [Iran-Iraq] war, some around 18 years of age and some closer to

30 – 150 chairs have been set out. These are intended for [the men and women] who have come to declare that even when there is no war they are willing to seek martyrdom.

"[This] is the inauguration of the fifth martyrdom unit. The area is abuzz with reporters and photographers, most of them foreign. The male martyrdom seekers are dressed in shrouds, with *kafiyas* on their heads and identification tags around their necks. They sit and wait for the program to begin. On the other side are the women, most without *kafiyas*, and in the corner [is a booth where] passersby can sign up [for suicide operations].

"An old woman comes by and asks 'What's going on here?' The young woman behind the table replies, "Mother, which [option] would you like to register for? [A martyrdom operation] at one of the four holy sites in Iraq, [a martyrdom operation] against Salman Rushdie, or [a martyrdom operation] against the occupiers of Jerusalem?..."

"The martyrdom seekers gradually arrive. At the sound of [his or her] name, each of them steps forward to receive the identification tags and to don the shroud.

"The Al-Usra Choir from Lebanon takes the stage and sings in Arabic. It looks as though, with the exception of the choir itself, nobody among the martyrdom seekers or the audience understands the lyrics. The only word recognized by all is *muqawama* – 'resistance.' At the sound of this word, spoken in a heavy Arabic accent, the martyrdom seekers raise their arms in a gesture which, I once read, symbolizes the oneness of God. The cameras begin to click, [taking] pictures that in a few hours will be circulated around the world.

"The sword writes in letters of blood – *muqawama*.

"See the blood spill

"Death to Israel

"Become one with this dead body that has the power to destroy [i.e. the dead body of the martyr]

"Death to Israel

"Like [blood]-red death [itself], have no mercy for the enemy's army

"There is no difference between soldiers and settlers.¹⁶

"...The fifth martyrdom unit is named after the Iranian martyr Nader Mahdavi.¹⁷ The other [four] were named after Lebanese and Palestinian martyrs. The ceremony is attended by about 200 people..."

"Several aspects of this convention draw [my] attention. The husky men are all dressed in civilian clothes. Few of them are in military uniform, and none are armed. Among the

militant-looking masculine martyrdom seekers [stands] a small woman. It is hard to believe that she, of all people, is secretary-general of the World Islamic Organization Headquarters for Remembering the Shahids, and the organizer of this ceremony. In 1979, she was [among those] who scaled the wall of the 'nest of spies' [i.e. the U.S. Embassy] in Tehran. She is also publisher and editor-in-chief of *Sobh-e Dokouheh*, the most conservative magazine in Iran. Today she is the leader of the martyrdom seekers, [both] the men and the women. [Her name is] Firooz Rajai-Far... [Standing] in a corner off to the side, I take the opportunity to ask her a few questions.

"'We sign up [volunteers] only on particular occasions,' [she tells me,] 'because if we [signed up] too many volunteers and exceeded our capacity, we would lose contact with the volunteers and that would not be good. We get a lot of response from the public.'

"According to Rajai-Far, of the 55,000 Iranians who have volunteered for martyrdom operations, a third of them – that is, about 20,000 – are women. [She stresses that] there are no special requirements; anybody can sign up, but when volunteers are classified into units, their abilities are taken into account.

"Rajai-Far stresses: 'Martyrdom operations are intended for the day [Iran] is occupied or [the day] the official forces of the regime collapse. In other words, if the army and Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps forces [ever] fail in their mission, God forbid, and Iran is occupied, then the martyrdom seekers will go into action.'

"Asked whether women need permission from their father or husband to sign up and take part in martyrdom operations, Rajai-Far replied: 'All fatwas state that defense [of the homeland] is a religious duty incumbent upon [every] Muslim man and woman, and [consequently] there is no need for permission from the father or husband. There is even no need for permission from the *Vali-ye Faqih* [i.e. the jurisprudent ruling the state]. Among [our] recruits are many married women, and if, during their classification into units, a problem arises that requires obtaining permission from the [woman's] husband or father, she takes care of it herself. We do not interfere in these matters. Families that express willingness to carry out martyrdom operations usually regard this as a religious duty. We have [entire] families that have proudly signed up [for martyrdom operations] – from the seven-year-old child to the 70-year-old grandmother – wishing to walk the path [of the martyrs] as a family.'

"[I asked Rajai-Far:] If you [ever] have to [order] martyrdom operations, will you send a seven-year-old on a mission?' [She answered:] 'When we organize [the recruits] into units, we have certain priorities. Priority is given to [those with] physical and military ability, or even knowledge of foreign languages. I believe that readiness [to perform martyrdom

operations] is a kind of deterrent [in itself]. That is, if state security is threatened, God forbid, all forces go into action, and if a seven-year-old has the opportunity, even he will defend [the homeland]. Seven-year-old children are already dying in wars. We see what is being done to seven-year-old children in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan. It's not as if war spared children...

“The meaning of a martyrdom operation is that in order to hurt the enemy, you carry out a mission that you know will cost you your life. Even a child can carry out such a mission if circumstances require it. History has witnessed such events. During the [Battle of] Karbala,¹⁸ [nobody] said that 11-year-olds were exempt from going to war. [People] even asked if a child who fell [in battle] would be considered a martyr, and they were told that yes, he would be considered a martyr.’

“Rajai-Far does not consider age a criterion when it comes to carrying out martyrdom operations.

“[She says:] ‘[The volunteers] register [for our movement], and their preparedness builds up [with training]. The training is identical for everyone, and they all train for similar operations. There are no separate units for women, since our units are not gender-specific, and our outlook regarding men and women is identical. To date, 1,300 people have received the training and have attained the necessary [level of] preparedness.’

“[I asked:] ‘Do you call up individuals under 20 years of age for training?’ [She answered:] ‘No, when we form units we select recruits aged between 20 and 30.’

“[Asked] how the training takes place, [she said]: ‘Much of our training [program] is concerned with cultural and political matters, and with introduction to [various] principles of the world of Islam. [When we talk of] psychological preparation for martyrdom operations, that is, of mental readiness..., we mean [training] in how to infiltrate the enemy ranks... This psychological readiness requires a foundation of ideological guidance. During the Iran-Iraq war, the soldiers trained themselves not to fear death by digging graves and praying inside them. One of the tasks that [the volunteer must perform] in order to carry out a martyrdom operation is to rid himself of his fear of death.

“Another part of the training [program] is concerned with preparation for guerilla warfare. At present, we do not provide [classical] military training, because martyrdom operations are not operations of classical warfare, and do not require more than two hours of military training. We have experts who plan the operations, prepare the necessary gear, pick out the route [of advance], and, within two or three hours, train a suitable individual for the mission.’

“[Finally, I asked:] ...Have you defined targets [for attack]?

“[She said:] ‘The targets will depend upon the circumstances, but we are ready, and we will go into action whenever the need arises.’

“... Behind the minibus, a young man and woman are donning their shrouds and covering their faces with *kafiyas*. I follow them. The woman has not yet covered her face. Her eyebrows are plucked and her eyes are large and beautiful. She is 23 and has a degree in theology. A housewife, she has been married for four years. She and her husband are both martyrdom seekers.

“[I ask them:] Why have you come here today?

“[The woman answers:] ‘I signed up six months ago at the Zaitoun Girls conference. A little while ago we were contacted, and had our first guidance session. Today is the [unit’s] inauguration.’

“Which options did you choose?

“We have not chosen options yet. We have only declared [our] willingness to carry out martyrdom operations.’

“If circumstances require it, would you be ready to perform such an operation?

“Yes.’

“...So if you are called upon tomorrow to perform a martyrdom operation, you will stick by your decision?

“After all, it’s not such a strange thing. During the liberation of Khoramshahr [in the Iran-Iraq war], when circumstances changed and [people] saw their family’s honor trampled and their relatives dying right before their eyes, a lot of ordinary people decided then and there to defend [the homeland] and join the war.’

“But that was during the war. There is a difference between [then and now]!

“You must always consider [the possibility of] a crisis. If [we] see people being killed before [our] eyes, many of us will wish to carry our martyrdom operations. Perhaps we will be few, but the young people in the streets will undertake to become martyrs... The Iranian youth is capable of many things.’

“What is the meaning of martyrdom?

“The [most] important aspect of martyrdom operations is that [they are carried out] when there is an imbalance [of power]. The martyr seeker conveys [the message] that even when our hands are empty, we do not lose our faith and our confidence...’

"Who are your enemies?"

"Those who plunder the world and do not want peace to prevail in the world... For instance, Israel, which does not want peace..."

"What training have you received so far?"

"We have only had one guidance session."

"Where did it take place?"

"I'm not sure I'm allowed to say. Ask the supervisor."

"How did you come to know about the issue of martyrdom?"

"My family, like everyone else, was in the Basij, and participated in the war [with Iraq], but I do not belong to one of the families of the martyrs..."

"Doesn't the training... take up a lot of your time?"

"No, martyrdom-seekers and Basij members must devote as much time [to training] as they devote to their studies."

"When you are a mother, will you still be willing to martyr yourself?"

"I am sure it will be very difficult, but my husband and I have decided to bring up our children to do the same..."

"IRAN AND THE [PALESTINIAN] INTIFADA

"The [Palestinian] Intifada has [a lot] to do with us. This can be gathered from Iran's policies and positions on Palestine, and even more directly from television programs and from Iran's official positions [as expressed] in the news [broadcasts]..."

"The book *Zaitoun Girls* mentions a religious fatwa which permits Iranians to carry out martyrdom operations. It also presents statements by Ayatollah Hossein Nouri Hamedani, who called for revering Palestinian women martyrs: 'Circumstances have forced the Palestinian nation to choose martyrdom operations as their preferred strategic method of fighting... Based on [the principles of] Islam, Muslims regard [such] operations as a type of jihad and self-sacrifice for the sake of God, and carry them out honestly and faithfully...'

"In another part of the book, Ayatollah Nouri Hamedani mentions a martyrdom operation carried out by a 22-year-old [Palestinian] mother of two, characterizing it as one of the glorious episodes in the history of Islamic jihad fighters.

He emphasizes that 'the oppressed Palestinian nation (...) has no option but [to wage] intifada and [perform] martyrdom operations, [which are considered] jihad for the sake of God...'

"FOR AND AGAINST MARTYRDOM OPERATIONS

"Shi'ite clerics disagree about the status of those who carry out martyrdom operations... The positions of several senior Shi'ite clerics [on this issue] can be found on the Internet. Ayatollah Yousef Sanei referred [to this matter] in a [November 19, 2005] interview with the BBC, which is posted on his website. [He said:] 'The difference between martyrdom on the battlefield [on the one hand] and bombings and [other acts of] terrorism [on the other is like the difference] between light and darkness, and between truth and falsehood. The two cannot even be compared. Martyrdom and [self-]sacrifice operations are permitted [only] in times of war, in confronting the enemy on the battlefield. Outside the battlefield, no acts of martyrdom, murder, or terrorism are permissible; they are nothing but [forms of] suicide. Murdering others is a terrible sin in Islam. Someone who kills himself while not on the battlefield, and kills even one other person [in addition to himself] – it is as though he has killed the entire world'..."

"Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri [also addressed the question of martyrdom on his website.] In reply to a question by blogger 'Siyasat9,' he wrote: 'The ruling on martyrdom operations depends on the circumstances, on the principles of *shari'a*, and on various [other factors]. Such operations require careful and painstaking consideration. If, at a certain time and place, martyrdom operations are required in order to protect Islam and Muslim lives from military attack by the enemies, and the [martyrdom] operations do not entail killing [civilians or committing other] violations – then [these operations] are permitted. Deciding this issue is the task of the religious experts.'

"Zohreh Sefati, a lecturer at a religious seminary for women, also wrote on the same blog, in reply to a question about martyrdom: 'The ruling of the primary source [i.e. the Koran] on this issue is that suicide operations [*intihar*] are prohibited, unless they serve the interests [of Islam], and are used as a tactic and method of deterrence against the infidels. The fact is that when the Muslims are at war with an infidel enemy who is fighting them, various methods of warfare should be employed to stop the attacks. If [martyrdom operations] will cause the enemy to retreat, and there is no other way, then [such operations] are permitted as a secondary [option].'

"Ayatollah Fazel Lankarani was also asked on this blog about martyrdom operations, and he replied: 'The Palestin-

ian question is a question of defense. Defending the Muslim people, principles or [countries] is always permissible, [using] every means.' This ruling shows that in answering [the question of] whether Islam permits martyrdom operations, the [religious scholars] considered the conditions that prevail in Palestine more than they considered [the conditions prevailing] in Iran...

"THE POLITICIANS' SILENCE ABOUT THE MARTYRDOM SEEKERS

"So far, not a single high-ranking figure in Iran has taken a clear and definite stance regarding martyrdom operations, especially regarding the participation of women in such operations. A few months ago, when the 2006 Lebanon war broke out, the martyrdom-seekers [tried to] speak out, but the authorities immediately silenced them. The then-spokesman of the World Islamic Organization Headquarters for Remembering the Shahids said...: 'Two groups that have received technical training have been dispatched to Lebanon via Syria. These two groups, one with nine members and the other with 12, have entered Lebanon in order to assist the [bands] of wounded and embattled soldiers [there], and will not leave until Hizbullah achieves absolute victory over the regime that is occupying Jerusalem.'

"After this report was published, Basij commander Hejazi made an official statement saying: 'Iran is not sending any military force to Lebanon; there will be no [Iranian] military presence in the [conflict] zone'...

"ZAHRA'S LAST TESTAMENT

"Her [body and] face are covered, and only her eyes are showing, but it is clear that she is a big girl. She is a single 22-year-old, in her third year at university, and she is eager to join the war and become a martyr:

"So far I have only participated in one guidance session,' [she says.] 'In the session, they explained about the culture of martyrdom. [They described] the types of operations that we would have to carry out, and [discussed] those who have carried out such operations in the past, [urging us] to be like them. They quoted Ayatollah Khomeini, [who said] that it was necessary to create a network of martyrs, and that such a network was essential for the state. I registered two years ago. It took them a year to contact me.'

"What are you doing here today?

"We had our first session a week ago. Today they gave us our identification tags and asked us to submit our last testament...'

"Zahra has [indeed] written a last testament. [It says:] 'Throughout my life, my goal has been to become a martyr, and now I have managed [to attain this goal]. My father fought on the front [during the Iran-Iraq war], and I too am eager to become a martyr and to fight on the front. Had I been alive during the [Iran-Iraq] war, I would have surely gone to fight on the front. Perhaps [back then] I would not have gone, but today this is my heart's desire...'

"My other goal is to destroy the enemies in the event that war breaks out, God forbid, and Iran or some other country is invaded, like Iraq was attacked.'

"[Zahra also told me:] 'They told us that if [Supreme] Leader [Khamenei] rules that jihad must be waged, [the martyrdom seekers] will be sent to [perform] martyrdom [operations]...'

"[I said to her:] I wonder about [your level of] readiness. Do you even know what a martyrdom operation is?

"[She answered:] 'It's just like in Palestine. They strap explosives [to your body], and then you attack in some location where the enemies gather, for instance in the Zionist settlements. If [one of us] is selected, he must go [and carry out the operation].'

"Have you reached the stage where you are ready [to do this]?

"Yes.'

"THE MARTYRS OF THE MINE FIELDS

"Hamid Davoudabadi, writer and expert on the [Iran-Iraq] war, [told me], 'Some [operations] during the war were martyrdom operations. [There were incidents] in which 40 children swept a mine field in order to set off the mines and clear the way for [the soldiers] who followed. Before setting out, these children hid for several hours behind an earth rampart, to avoid being hit by a bullet... One of them told me: "If you are hit by a bullet you don't count as a martyr." Preserving one's life is a commandment in Islam. But these children who spoke this way all stepped into the mine fields and became martyrs.'

"Davoudabadi explained the essence of martyrdom: 'It is very important to consider this issue, and to ask ourselves why a person would come to the point that he kills himself in order to hurt the enemy and save his people. The root of the matter is that when a person is under siege, he has no choice. In war, there is the oppressor and the oppressed, and that is why such operations are carried out. The Palestinians [suffered] 50 years of Israeli violence before realizing that it is possible for one of them to kill [himself], [in order to] inflict

graver harm on the enemy. [In a martyrdom operation], we lose one person [but] kill hundreds of [the enemy]...'

"Davoudabadi stressed: 'The first [Iranians] who carried out martyrdom operations received religious authorization [to do so] from the Imam [Khomeini]. They were Shi'ites, and acknowledged the authority of the ruling jurisprudent. At that time, the ruling jurisprudent was Khomeini, and it was he who gave them religious authorization. Back then, there were those who regarded martyrdom operations as mere acts of suicide... Some of them expressed their concern to Khomeini, and he told them: "It is definitely allowed, it is definitely allowed, it is definitely allowed." However, he set out conditions under which martyrdom operations were considered licit, [saying that] civilians must not be hurt in these operations.'

"[I asked Davoudabadi:] Are these conditions being met [today]?"

"In Lebanon, the martyrdom-seekers displayed great sensitivity, making sure to time their operations in such a way that no civilian would be in the vicinity. In one case, there were some children playing nearby, [so the martyrdom seekers] gave them some chewing gum and chocolates, and sent them away on some excuse. Those who wish to condemn martyrdom operations obviously state that they [cause] civilians to be killed. [It is true that] on some occasions and in some places, civilians may be accidentally hurt. [Attacks] from the air, for example, inevitably result in the death of civilians. But in [planning] martyrdom operations, all aspects can be considered [in order to make sure that] children and women are not killed. According to data published by the enemy, 95% of the Israelis are soldiers. [In any case], all [Israeli] civilians are armed.'

"The fact that they are armed makes them soldiers?"

"They are paramilitary... In an area populated by Muslims, they build four houses inhabited by Jews, and give them guns. [Then these Jews] kill [Muslims] under the pretext of defending their homes and families. The areas populated by Israelis are like army camps. A martyr who blows himself up among people lining up for the bus knows that early in the morning these buses are packed with Zionist soldiers en route to their bases."

*A. Savyon is Director of MEMRI's Iranian Media Project; M. Nissimov and Y. Mansharof are MEMRI Research Fellows.

NOTES

¹Fars (Iran), January 28, 2008.

²For an interview in which Rajai-Far states that she has signed up for martyrdom operations, see MEMRI Inquiry & Analysis No. 181,

"The Internal Debate in Iran: How to Respond to Western Pressure Regarding Its Nuclear Program," June 17, 2004, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=ia&ID=IA18104>. For an interview in which Rajai-Far condones suicide operations, see MEMRI TV Clip No. 736, "On the Iranian Movement of Martyrdom Seekers", July 2, 2005, <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/736.htm>. For an interview in which Rajai-Far threatens suicide operations against U.S. forces in the Gulf, see MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 1378, "Top Iranian Military Commanders: In Case of Attack on Iran, We'll Target U.S. Troops in Gulf; U.S. Warships 'Have No Maneuverability and Are Easily Sunk'; Iranian Suicide Squad Commander: We'll Carry Out Suicide Operations in Gulf Countries," December 6, 2006, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP137806>.

³See MEMRI Inquiry & Analysis No. 181, "The Internal Debate in Iran: How to Respond to Western Pressure Regarding Its Nuclear Program," June 17, 2004, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=ia&ID=IA18104>.

⁴Sharq (Iran), June 5, 2004.

⁵Iranian Channel 1 TV, May 2, 2008.

⁶Farda (Iran), January 29, 2008.

⁷See MEMRI TV Clip No. 782, "Iranian President-Elect Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: 'Is There Art that Is More Beautiful, More Divine, and More Eternal than the Art of Martyrdom?'" July 25, 2005, <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/782.htm>.

⁸ISNA (Iran), February 20, 2008.

⁹Parto-ye Sokhan (Iran), February 6, 2008.

¹⁰See MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 945, "Iran's New President Glorifies Martyrdom," July 27, 2005, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP94505>.

¹¹See also MEMRI TV Clip No. 906, "Iranian Animated Film for Children Promotes Suicide Bombings," <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/906.htm>; MEMRI TV Clip No. 1648, "Israeli Villains Assassinate Abu Jihad and Harass Lebanese, Leading Young Man to Commit Suicide Bombing in an Iranian TV Movie," (<http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/1648.htm>).

¹²See MEMRI Inquiry & Analysis No. 407, "Iran's Response to Western Warnings: 'First Strike,' 'Preemptive Attack,' Long-Range Ballistic Missiles, 'Asymmetric [Guerilla] Warfare,'" November 28, 2007, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=iran&ID=IA40707>.

¹³Fars (Iran), October 29, 2008.

¹⁴Aftab (Iran), May 3, 2008.

¹⁵The Zanan website has since been blocked to access from inside Iran. However, the article was also posted on the website of Iranian journalist Manuchehr Honarmand, who resides in Europe, (www.khandaniha.eu/items.php?id=244). Recently, a slightly modified version of the article was posted on the Zanan website, now accessible only from outside the country (<http://www.zanan.co.ir/social/000822.html>).

¹⁶The word “settlers” refers to Israeli civilians, who according to the official Iranian line are all illegal settlers.

¹⁷Nader Mahdavi was an IRGC naval commander who died in a 1987 suicide mission against the U.S. Navy in the Persian Gulf.

¹⁸The battle in 680 in which Ali and 70 of his supporters were killed by the Omayyad Caliph Yazid bin Muawiya.

