

PMW Special Report

**Palestinian Children Yearning Martyrdom,
Encouraged by Parents**

Wajdi, a 14 year old:

“When I become a *Shahid* [Martyr], give out cake”

Executive Summary:

‘When I become a Martyr, give out Kannafa’ [sweet cake]. These **are the words that 14-year-old Wajdi Al-Hattab often said to his friends** in the days prior to his death in the riots, as reported in the official Palestinian Authority daily paper. The paper went on to report his 9th grade friends’ reaction to his death: “they swore they would carry on, down the road of *shahada* [Martyrdom for Allah].” [*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Nov. 9 2000] A 12 year old boy who died in the fighting named Karam, so yearned for his own Martyrdom, that he wrote his own “death announcements” on the walls of his own home. [ibid, Nov. 30, 2000]



Wajdi, aged 14

The scene has been replayed over and over during the past two months: Palestinian children going up against Israeli soldiers, even in situations involving gunfire and life-threatening situations. Many children are wounded or even killed as a result. What motivates children to place themselves in such dangerous situations, so that at times it seems that they are seeking death?

From the PA media and education the apparent answer is that the children are pushed by their parents, teachers, friends and the education they receive in the Palestinian Authority schools glorifying death as Martyrs [“*Shahid*” – death for Allah] – as a supreme virtue. As the number of those killed rises, the Palestinian media extols and exalts not only those killed, but also their willingness to die as Martyrs for Allah, emphasizing that dying a Martyr’s death was the realization of their hopes. Young children who are injured are said to seek a higher goal - heroic death for Allah. By examining closely what the children and their parents are saying it is likely that there are young children who are going directly to areas of conflict with the clear goal of endangering their lives, in order to their please their parents, friends, and teachers.

The following are a number of stories among many that were prominently reported in the Palestinian media. In particular, note the positive attitude of parents toward their children’s death, and the statements of injured children that they seek a higher goal, death and Martyrdom.

The Report:

“The Martyr Wajdi Al-Hattab (9th grade) responded to the call of Allah and achieved the Martyrdom that he yearned for, so that it would clear the way for the liberation of Al Aksa and Palestine from the defilement of the occupation. He would always say to his friends: ‘When I become a Martyr, give out Kannafa [sweet cake]. He always spoke about his uncle who became a Martyr in southern Lebanon, and yearned to become a Martyr like him – and [now] he attained what he yearned for. He reached the highest levels with Allah... [Wajdi’s gym teacher relates:] Wajdi asked me to give out Kannafa if he becomes a Martyr... His classmates swore that they would continue in the path of Martyrdom until the liberation of Jerusalem...”

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Nov. 9 2000]

“The danger of injury of the boy Saber Al-Ashkar (aged 18), paralysis and permanent disability, just added to his mother’s determination to encourage her sons to participate in the Intifada riots.... and the fact of his injury by a live bullet did not cause her to mourn... She said that she had [previously] lost her older son Iyad, and described him as the first flower that appeared in her life. She is not interested in anything but encouraging her sons to self-sacrifice and Martyrdom for the land of Palestine...”

[*Al-Ayyam*, Nov. 1, 2000]

“A PATV broadcast conducted conversations with 2nd grade school children. An interviewer spoke with a child who had thrown stones [in the riots]:

Interviewer: “You threw stones at the army and injured your leg. Will you throw again?”

Child: “Yes”.

Interviewer: “You aren’t afraid to die?”

Child: [embarrassed, hesitant]

Interviewer: [indicates “No” to the child by shaking her head in the negative]

Child: “No.”

[PATV, Oct. 19, 2000]

[Headline]: “The Boy Martyr Karam Al-Kard [age 12] announced of his own death on the walls of his home” [article text] “Prior to his being injured... Karam announced his own death on the walls of his home and attributed to himself Martyrdom and its honor, in his handwriting on the walls. The notice read: ‘The Al-Kard family announces the death of its courageous Martyr Karam Fat’he Al-Kard...”

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Nov. 30, 2000]

“The Martyr Wajdi [aged 14, said] to his father: ‘I will bring you a *Shahada* (Martyrdom) that you will be proud of for the rest of your life’. His mother says: ‘My son is not my son only, he belongs to his noble Palestinian people... One of his friends said that the last words of the Martyr, that he repeated over and over, spoke of the significance of Martyrdom and on becoming a Martyr.”

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Nov. 8, 2000]

“[He] sacrificed his son (aged 18) in order to redeem the homeland and Jerusalem.

He stated that becoming a Martyr is a tremendous source of pride and a medal on his chest... he added that his son always spoke about martyrdom and his desire to become a Martyr.”

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Nov. 9, 2000]

The Martyr Muhammad Abu Tahoun wrote down his final words on his notebook: ‘The Martyrs will attain Paradise, and I will be with them, Allah willing...’”.

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Nov. 9 2000]

“The father [of Mohammed Hiza’ Halas, 23]: ... [He has] great pride that his progeny has become a Martyr With regard to his mother, she says that her offspring wished to become a Martyr and she anticipated it.”

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Nov. 2, 2000].

“Our blood is a sign of our fighting for our precious Palestine”

[A teacher, next to pupils on Palestinian Television, Nov. 2, 2000].

“What pushes our children and youth to the arenas of death?... [Ramadan Saadi Abd Rabbo, an injured 13-year-old, said:] ‘my goal is not to be injured, but rather something higher: Martyrdom.’”

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Nov. 8, 2000]

“The wounded 11-year-old, Amr Qarut, wants to win the honor of a Martyr’s death... and he insists on continuing the [violent] struggle.”

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Nov. 6, 2000]

“The wounded Sa’ed Awad Allah [aged 11], from the Jaballiya [refugee] camp said: We are all potential Martyrs for Jerusalem and the Homeland”

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, 6 November 2000]

“We must battle until we achieve peace on our own and until our blood will not be spilled for naught, we must battle and die in order to attain all that we want.” [8-year-old girl Halah Badir]

[*Al-Ayyam*, Nov. 2, 2000].

“[22-year-old Hazem Mussa Abu Def’s] brother... feels honor and pride from his brother’s becoming a Martyr, ...and added that he intends to continue on the path started by his brother.”

[*Al-Ayyam*, Nov. 2, 2000].

"I will take my soul in my hand and toss it into the abyss of death.
And then either life that will gladden friends or death that will anger the enemy.
The honorable soul has two objectives: Achieving death and honor."

‘Song of the Martyr’ recited by schoolgirls.

(the poem appears in 5th, 6th and 12th grade PA school books)

[PATV, Oct. 27 2000]

This current promotion of Martyrdom is part of a long-term phenomenon in the Palestinian society. PA television in 1998 described two mothers’ joy at their

children's "Martyrdom" in the Intifada, as follows:

Narrator: "... the heroine was shot ...and her pure blood flowing and her pure spirit joyously going to her creator...."

Girl's Mother: "I asked: who is she that died? She told me – 'it's your daughter.' I said: 'Thank Allah, thank Allah. We have a right to liberate our homeland and we will liberate it. It is our honor to fall ... She would say "it doesn't matter, I will die for the redemption of the homeland", meaning – I want to die for the redemption of the homeland... Intisar fell and it is an honor for us and an honor for our children..."

Relative of the family: "Every time she heard a bang [she said] 'someone was shot, I hope that next time it will be me, I want to die as a martyr'".

[PATV, Oct. 7, 1998]

Mother of Muhammad ["martyred" in the riots]: "...I hope that all my children will be martyrs..."

[PATV, Sept. 9, 1998]