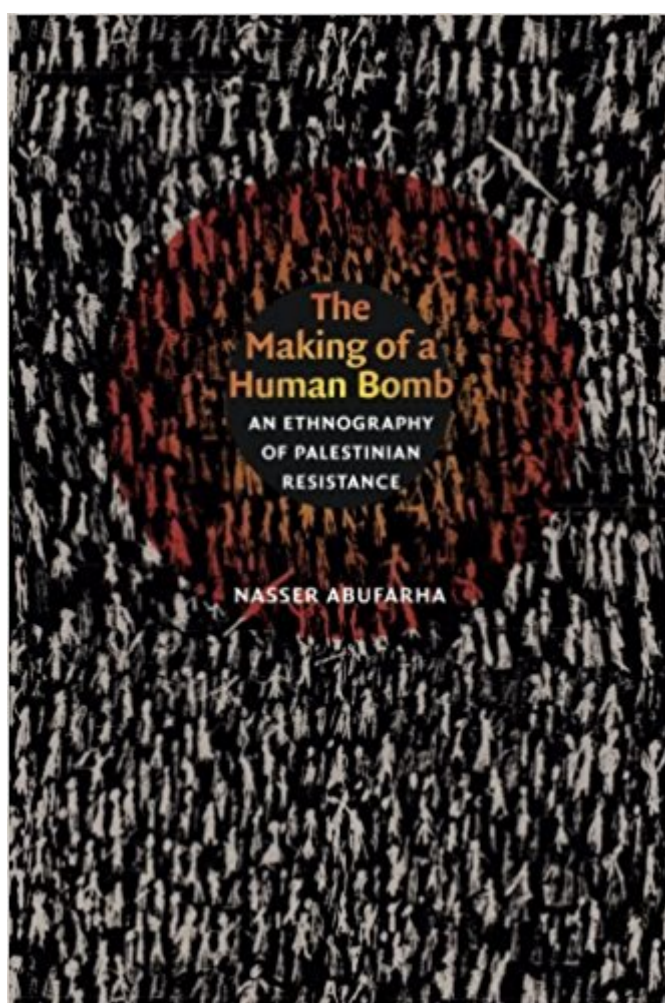


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The Making Of A Human Bomb: An Ethnography Of Palestinian Resistance (The Cultures And Practice Of Violence)



Synopsis

In *The Making of a Human Bomb*, Nasser Abufarha, a Palestinian anthropologist, explains the cultural logic underlying Palestinian martyrdom operations (suicide attacks) launched against Israel during the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000–2006). In so doing, he sheds much-needed light on how Palestinians have experienced and perceived the broader conflict. During the Intifada, many of the martyrdom operations against Israeli targets were initiated in the West Bank town of Jenin and surrounding villages. Abufarha was born and raised in Jenin. His personal connections to the area enabled him to conduct ethnographic research there during the Intifada, while he was a student at a U.S. university. Abufarha draws on the life histories of martyrs, interviews he conducted with their families and members of the groups that sponsored their operations, and examinations of Palestinian literature, art, performance, news stories, and political commentaries. He also assesses data about the bombers, targets, and fatalities caused from more than two hundred martyrdom operations carried out by Palestinian groups between 2001 and 2004. Some involved the use of explosive belts or the detonation of cars; others entailed armed attacks against Israeli targets (military and civilian) undertaken with the intent of fighting until death. In addition, he scrutinized suicide attacks executed by Hamas and Islamic Jihad between 1994 and 2000. In his analysis of Palestinian political violence, Abufarha takes into account Palestinians' understanding of the history of the conflict with Israel, the effects of containment on Palestinians' everyday lives, the disillusionment created by the Oslo peace process, and reactions to specific forms of Israeli state violence. *The Making of a Human Bomb* illuminates the Palestinians' perspective on the conflict with Israel and provides a model for ethnographers seeking to make sense of political violence.

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Customer Reviews

“The Making of a Human Bomb by Nasser Abufarha is required reading, for it links the 21st century’s leading sociological perspective (culture) with the new century’s quintessential form of political violence (suicide bombers, or SBs).” - Albert J. Bergesen, American Journal of Sociology

“With this book, [Abufarha] has made several incisive contributions, and not only towards understanding the suicide bombers of the Intifada. Yet non-Palestinian scholars invested in research and reading about Palestine should read Abufarha’s book not only for his insightful analysis but also for the value of his reportage of the life on the ground perspectives of Palestinians in the northern West Bank. On both accounts, and various mixtures thereof, this is an important book I highly recommend.” - Les W. Field, Journal of Anthropological Research

“Abufarha can hardly be blamed for this apparent disconnect between his strongest material and his analytical conclusions. It results from writing perhaps the most difficult kind of ethnography imaginable, one whose physical subject has vanished and been replaced by competing ideologies. Abufarha deserves credit for rising to this challenge and writing an insightful, passionately researched, and consistently provocative if analytically uneven book. He has broken new ground; may others join him in tilling it.” - Diana Allan, American Ethnologist

“[Abufarha’s] research is extensive and his thesis powerful. . . .” - Steven E. Levingston, Washington Post

“Short Stack” blog

“[T]he best book I’ve come across on explaining the source of conflict. . . . The author does a very good job of presenting a complex situation and making it understandable. It’s a powerful book. I’d highly recommend it to anyone interested in the core reasons behind the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, understanding the Palestinian use of suicide attacks on civilians, and/or understanding some factors which drive the acceptance and use of suicide bombs in any culture.” - Debbie White, Different Time, Different Place blog

“The Making of a Human Bomb is a powerful book. Reflecting on suicide bombings, Nasser Abufarha explains more: the collective state of mind of the Palestinian population since the Oslo process broke down in 2000. His book will be quite useful for anyone seeking to understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as perceived from the Palestinian side.”

• John Quigley, author of The Case for Palestine: An International Law Perspective

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This book is a sober and holistic approach to understanding how acts of terrorism/suicide bombings manifest in Palestine. The author uses history, ethnography and case studies to create picture that demonstrates how and why these things manifest. This book, in my mind also goes a long way to

forcing the reader to think about current "solutions" to terrorism and present a picture that demonstrates that these methods just make the problems worse. I often say, you don't have to like something but if you want to really address a problem you have to understand it. This book goes a long way to doing just that.

This is a powerful book, and if you persevere with it, it is likely to change your outlook on the world conflict that seems to be centered on the region previously known as Palestine. It is an ethnography written by an anthropologist so it was not intended to be read by the lay reader who may be unfamiliar with the jargon associated with anthropology. However, much of the book is readily accessible to readers who are not from academia. There are some truly fascinating chapters. In particular a chapter that covers interviews with "terrorists" (as we in the West know them - though they think of themselves as martyrs to a cause). These are not the typical types of interviews conducted over a brief period by "outsiders" such as journalists. These are interviews conducted over several sessions by a native of the area who has lived for many years in the USA and has returned to his roots to research this book. If you persevere with this book, you may wake up in the middle of the night, as I did, and say to yourself "I get it now." The more people who have that realization, the more chance we will have of coming to some kind of peace in the region.

Lots of information, good to learn why this fanatics twist the Quran. No doubts Mr. Abufarna did a good job

This book is not about the supporting or condemning of "suicide bombers", but about understanding a phenomenon. Reality is very different from what we hear in the media. At the same time, martyrdom operations are also very different from what many of us imagine: acts of despair, or alternatively, religious fanaticism. While the focus of the book is on martyrdom operations, it provides excellent insights into many other aspects of reality in Palestine as well. To me, this anthropological study is one of the most important recent books written recently about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Certainly, it is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand realities in Palestine. (Review by Daniel)

I probably have a better understanding of the history and reasons behind the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than the average American, but I learned a lot from "The Making of a Human Bomb." It's the best book I've come across on explaining the source of conflict. I knew the least about what

apparently most Palestinians-in-occupied-areas assume Americans know: what daily life is like for the average person in Israeli-occupied Palestinian areas. Reading this book really helped me understand the deeper reasons behind the conflict, why peace seems unreachable, why suicide attacks are used, and why they're used against civilian populations. While parts of this book are rather technical in language (especially the introduction and conclusion, which basically state what aspects the book covered and how the author went about his research), the great majority of the book is in conversational language and easy to follow. I found the conversational parts extremely interesting and enlightening. Since the book intentionally focuses on how Palestinians view the conflict with Israel, Israel doesn't come off as looking very good. However, the author simply presents the facts and does a good job of leaving it up to the reader to judge whether the actions on either side are moral or not. I never felt like this was a "bash Israel" or "pro resistance" book. It came across as an objective look at the problem, how it developed, and the underlying cultural motivations behind the popularity of suicide bombs as a means of Palestinian resistance. The author does a very good job of presenting a complex situation and making it understandable. It's a powerful book. I'd highly recommend it to anyone interested in the core reasons behind the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, understanding the Palestinian use of suicide attacks on civilians, and/or understanding some factors which drive the acceptance and use of suicide bombs in any culture. Review by Debbie from Different Time, Different Place Book Reviews (differenttimedifferentplace.blogspot.com)

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