

# The Making of a Human Bomb: An Ethnography of Palestinian Resistance (The Cultures and Practice of Violence)



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 (2000-6). 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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