

## Participation of Women in Terrorist Activity: A global threat

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### *Abstract*

*World has been witnessing women in every way of life. Positively, there is no work which a woman cannot do. But women while running behind the horse of success, going away from the work which should have been done. She is getting herself involved in the illegal activities too. One can witness sharp growth of that globally. Now, in the technological era its become easy to co ordinate to do illegal/disruptive activities. Though comparatively, participation of women in these kind of activities are less than men, we cannot ruled out the consequence as less. This article focus on the meaning , different female terrorist groups, thereason for women to involve in terrorism etc.*

*Key words: women, global, terrorism,*

### **Introduction:**

*"I had a pistol in my belt, a grenade in my pocket and TNT in my bag. I was a woman dressed in a fashionable way. I opened my bag for security but the man just saw my make-up and waved me through.".....Leila Khaled .<sup>1</sup>*

The above said statement shows that people hardly believe women can be a terrorist. Women are generally supposed to be calm and peace lover. Globally there are so many problems happening in which terrorism is one of the most dangerous and unfortunate. That to if a women is made to involve in terrorist activities that will be even more unpredictable. Women have had a long history of participant in one or the other way either as a victim or as a perpetrator. This history may be traced from the earliest modern terrorist group, from the nineteenth century Russian People's Will to the current wave of suicide bombings carried out by the Chechen Black Widows and the Tamil Tiger's Birds of Paradise. Women are becoming more lethal. In Jihadist organizations including even in Al Qaeda, which had long banned females taking part in terrorist actions. There are certain political, economic and social motivating factors which are making women to join terrorism. Terrorist organisations have used women as logisticians in both their basic operations as well as during the execution of a terrorist attack. Women act as couriers, protectors and decoys in terrorist activities. Women terrorists are often used to courier money and weapons to various terrorist cells. Women also undertake the part in attracting new logisticians, financiers and suicide bombers. Women act as Suicide Bombers too. No wonder, some women terrorists have successfully climbed the ladder of hierarchy in a terrorist group and played a role as strategic thinkers that can be influential in determining the decision-making process within the group.

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<sup>1</sup> The most famous female hijacker in the world in the late 1960s - beautiful, dangerous and politically committed to doing whatever might further the Palestinian cause.

**Definition of Terrorism:**

Terrorism is the systematic use of terror especially as a means of coercion.<sup>2</sup> Definitions of terrorism are usually complex and controversial and because of the inherent ferocity and violence of terrorism, the term in its popular usage has developed an intense stigma. It was first coined in the 1790s to refer to the terror used during the French Revolution by the revolutionaries against their opponents. The Jacobin party of Maximilien Robespierre carried out a Reign of Terror involving mass executions by the guillotine. Although terrorism in this usage implies an act of violence by a state against its domestic enemies, since the 20th century the term has been applied most frequently to violence aimed, either directly or indirectly, at governments in an effort to influence policy or topple an existing regime.<sup>3</sup>

*United Nations:* The UN General Assembly Resolution 49/60 (adopted on December 9, 1994), titled "Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism," contains a provision describing terrorism: Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them. The UN Member States still have no agreed-upon definition of terrorism, and this fact has been a major obstacle to meaningful international countermeasures. Terminology consensus would be necessary for a single comprehensive convention on terrorism, which some countries favor in place of the present 12 piecemeal conventions and protocols. Cynics have often commented that one state's "terrorist" is another state's "freedom fighter".

*The Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism* was adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers of the Interior and the Council of Arab Ministers of Justice in Cairo, Egypt in 1998. Terrorism was defined in the convention as: Any act or threat of violence, whatever its motives or purposes, that occurs in the advancement of an individual or collective criminal agenda and seeking to sow panic among people, causing fear by harming them, or placing their lives, liberty or security in danger, or seeking to cause damage to the environment or to public or private installations or property or to occupying or seizing them, or seeking to jeopardize national resources.

*UN Security Council Resolution 1566* (2004) gives a definition: criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act. A UN panel, on March 17, 2005, described terrorism as any act "intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act."

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/terrorism>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/terrorism>

*The European Union* defines terrorism for legal/official purposes in Art.1 of the Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism (2002). This provides that terrorist offences are certain criminal offences set out in a list comprised largely of serious offences against persons and property which: given their nature or context, may seriously damage a country or an international organization where committed with the aim of: seriously intimidating a population; or unduly compelling a Government or international organization to perform or abstain from performing any act; or seriously destabilizing or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organization.

*The United Kingdom's Terrorism Act 2000* defines terrorism to include an act "designed seriously to interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system". An act of violence is not even necessary under this definition.

*The United States* has defined terrorism under the Federal Criminal Code. Title 18 of the United States Code defines terrorism and lists the crimes associated with terrorism. In Section 2331 of Chapter 113(B), defines terrorism as: "...activities that involve violent... or life-threatening acts... that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State and... appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and...(C) occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States...".

The difficulty in defining "terrorism" is in agreeing on a basis for determining when the use of violence (directed at whom, by whom, for what ends) is legitimate; therefore, the modern definition of terrorism is inherently controversial. The use of violence for the achievement of political ends is common to state and non-state groups. The majority of definitions in use has been written by agencies directly associated with government, and is systematically biased to exclude governments from the definition. The contemporary label of "terrorist" is highly pejorative-- it denotes a lack of legitimacy and morality. As a practical matter, so-called acts of "terrorism" or terrorism are often a tactic committed by the actors as part of a larger military or geo-political agenda.<sup>4</sup>

### **Historical Review of Female Terrorism:**

Throughout history, women have played extensive roles in the planning and executing of terrorist activities. These women come from diverse geographical, social, political, and economic backgrounds and are motivated to participate for a variety of reasons. For the past few decades, women have been directly involved in many international or domestic conflicts.<sup>5</sup> Countries that have experienced women in terrorist or militant organizations include Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Guatemala,

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<sup>4</sup> <https://dema.az.gov/sites/default/files/Publications/AR-Terrorism%20Definitions-BORUNDA.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Kim Jordan and Myriam Denov, "Birds of Freedom? Perspectives on Female Emancipation and Sri Lanka's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 9, no. 1 (November 2007): 42.

Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, Nepal, Peru, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Zimbabwe, and many others.<sup>6</sup> Within these conflicts, the percentage of female fighting forces varies extensively depending on the region, but most estimates vary between 10% - 30% of the combatants as females.<sup>7</sup> It is evident that in the contemporary operating environment women play significant roles in conflict. The foundation for these roles dates back to at least the end of the 19th century, with the involvement of women in the insurgency against the Russian government.

One of the first well-documented cases of women involved in terrorism was the assassination of Tsar Alexander II of Russia in 1881. Sophia Perovskaya initiated the attack by signaling fellow members of the radical revolutionary group known as Narodnaya Volya, or the People's Will.<sup>8</sup> Ten of the original twenty-nine members of the executive committee were females, and eleven terrorist attacks were conducted by women from 1905 -1908.<sup>9</sup> Two of the eight conspirators directly involved with the attack on the Tsar were women, including Perovskaya and Gesya Gelfman. Women involved with the People's Will were devoted to violence and extremist behavior and saw terror and their own heroic self-sacrifice as an end in itself and believed the ultimate test of their commitment and devotion to the revolution was their willingness to die.<sup>10</sup> This fanatical dedication to a cause encouraged women to take increasingly dangerous and important leadership roles in the People's Will.

### **Terrorist Organisations:**

**al-Qaeda (AQ):** Women in al-Qaeda (AQ) play a number of roles within the organization, but a majority of the women operates outside of the public eye encouraging and supporting AQ's next generation of terrorists. Osama bin Laden, the founder of al-Qaeda, said "women are playing an essential role as supporters, facilitators, and promoters in carrying out the Jihad"<sup>11</sup>. Women frequently act as recruiters and ideological supporters in AQ. There was an online periodical, *al-Khansaa*, published by the Women's Information Bureau of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in 2004 indoctrinates that the goal of a woman is also to become a Shahid.<sup>12</sup> *Al-Shamihka*, another woman magazine encourage women who have lost their husbands to take revenge, a common motivation for female participants throughout global terrorist organizations.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>8</sup> Nation Master.com, Sofia Lvovna Perovskaya, <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Sophia-Lvovna-Perovskaya> (accessed 10 th March, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Amy Knight, "Female Terrorists in the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party," Russian Review 38 (1979): 139.

<sup>10</sup> Knight, "Female Terrorists in the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party," 149.

<sup>11</sup> Von Knop, K. (2007). The female jihad: Al Qaeda's women. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 30(5), 396-414 at 405.

<sup>12</sup> Supra 12, p407

<sup>13</sup> Al-Maamoun, A. (2014, May 24). "Al-Shamikhha": Your modern guide to jihad. Raseef22. Retrieved from <http://raseef22.com/News-Detail/1054/Al-Shamikhha%E2%80%9D-Your-Modern-Guide-to-Jihad>

Women also play a strong role as recruiters in al-Qaeda. Cunningham <sup>14</sup> states “women’s use of, and influence over, technology has the potential to affect female standing within groups and their overall operational roles”. Umm Osama, founder of all female unit indicated that it would be a female suicide branch; this statement created a number of comments from men who still believe that women’s support of AQ should be done mostly as support for their husbands and sons, not in a combat role <sup>15</sup>. Women involved in Jabhat al-Nusra, the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda, are supporting the organization through intelligence gathering and even a few combatants. Their roles as combatants are still discouraged by a majority of the men in the organization <sup>16</sup>. Aafia Siddiqui, also known as “Lady al Qaeda,” is wanted by jihadi groups all over the world. Siddiqui was arrested by the U.S. in 2008. It is important to note that her role was likely related to the logistical and technical support of AQ. This role is not as known for female involvement in AQ, but it is still a role that some women have played in the past<sup>17</sup>.

**The Black Widows:** Women play a significant role in the Chechen Black Widows; the group has been active since their first attack on June 7, 2000. This act was committed when “KhavaBarayev, cousin of well-known Chechen filed commander ArbiBarayev, and Luisa Magomadova drove a truck filled with explosives into the temporary headquarters of an elite OMAN (Russian Special Forces) detachment in the village of Alkhan Yurt in Chechnya”<sup>18</sup>. One motivating factor for the Black Widows is revenge. They were named by the international press as the Black Widows “when it became clear that many were acting in revenge for the deaths of their husbands, sons, and brothers”<sup>19</sup> Chechen women are also motivated by the desire to restore honor to themselves and their families.

Following the Dubrovka hostage incident in 2002, media outlets released a pre-recorded video that arrived the day before the hostage taking situation. As noted by one of the women in the recording sent to the media, “We might as well die here as in Chechnya however we will die taking hundreds of nonbelievers with us”.<sup>20</sup> This desire to exact revenge for family members indicates a lack of coercion by other Black Widows. There is a personal motivation for women to join the Black Widows which increases the likelihood that the organization will continue to procure new members.

**Hamas:** It is also known as the Islamic Revival Movement, is a conservative terrorist organization in Israel. This organization held control as the leading political power of the Gaza

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<sup>14</sup> Cunningham, K. (2007). Countering female terrorism. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 30(2), p 114.

<sup>15</sup> Cragin, R. K. & Daly, S. A. (2009). *Women as terrorists: Mothers, recruiters, and martyrs*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International.

<sup>16</sup> Abouzeid, R. (2014, July 20). Syrian al-Qaeda women: Searching for combat, martyrdom on the front lines. Al Jazeera. Retrieved from <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/7/20/syrian-women-qaedarebels.html>

<sup>17</sup> Harris, S. (2014, August 26). Lady al Qaeda; The world’s most wanted woman. *Foreign Policy*. Retrieved from [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/08/26/lady\\_al\\_qaeda\\_the\\_worlds\\_most\\_wanted\\_woman](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/08/26/lady_al_qaeda_the_worlds_most_wanted_woman)

<sup>18</sup> Speckhard, A. & Akhmedova, K. (2006). Black Widows: The Chechen female suicide terrorists. In Yoram Schweitzer (Ed.), *Female suicide bombers: Dying for equality?* (63-80). Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University.

<sup>19</sup> *Supra*, p 63

<sup>20</sup> CNN (2002, Oct. 25) Gunmen release chilling video. Retrieved from [www.archives.cnn.com/2002/world/europe/oct/28/moscow.siege.video/](http://www.archives.cnn.com/2002/world/europe/oct/28/moscow.siege.video/)

Strip from 2007 to June of 2014. There is currently a political union between Fatah and Hamas to govern Gaza. Fatah was previously the leading political power of the West Bank. Hamas has women involved in their organization, however they are seen in more of a logistical and support role than a leadership role. While Hamas is considered an extremely conservative organization, they have used women. While in prison, at-Tamimi is seen as “a symbol of the Palestinian resistance and then new feminine face of Hamas”<sup>21</sup>.

**The Tamil Tigers:** The Tamil Tigers, also known as LTTE, was a terrorist organization formed to combat the Sri Lankan government in the late 1970s and defeated in 2009. The organization engaged in activities meant to further their intention to create a separate state for the Tamil people of Sri Lanka. The Black Tigers, sometimes referred to as the Freedom Birds, was a branch within the organization which was considered the suicide wing of the LTTE. The fact that a significant percentage of women were involved in the suicide branch of the organization indicates that the Tamil Tigers were accepting, at least to a certain degree, of women’s involvement in their organization. However, there were certain parameters put in to place to ensure that women’s involvement was still culturally acceptable. For example, “female Black Tigers are separated from their male counterparts, and relationships are not allowed to develop between them”<sup>22</sup>. In addition to using women from a tactical standpoint, it was noted that “there was a psychological advantage to be gained using women to defeat the Sri Lankan military in a country where women were seen as second-class citizens”.<sup>23</sup> For women who were already assaulted or raped, joining the LTTE was a chance for redemption. For those who are sexually assaulted, “Tamil women are considered ‘damaged goods’ and social customs prevent them from getting married or bearing children”<sup>24</sup>. The Tamil people held their own elections in 2000 and elected the LTTE as their governmental representation.<sup>25</sup> The role of woman in the LTTE was solidified in 1983 with the establishment of an entire division of women called the Women’s Front of the Liberation Tigers. Female leadership took over the Women’s Front in 1989.<sup>26</sup>

**Black September:** It was a terrorist organization whose members supported the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). PFLP terrorists hijacked four airliners in September 1970 and demanded the release of several members of a Palestinian Liberation unit that were being held in Israel.<sup>27</sup> Leila Khaled, a Palestinian woman, was in charge of the fourth hijacking and

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<sup>21</sup> Bloom, M. (2011). *Bombshell: Women and terrorism*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press at p 112.

<sup>22</sup> Cragin, R. K. & Daly, S. A. (2009). *Women as terrorists: Mothers, recruiters, and martyrs*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International at p 67.

<sup>23</sup> Bloom, M. (2011). *Bombshell: Women and terrorism*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press at p 153.

<sup>24</sup> Von Knop, K. (2007). The female jihad: Al Qaeda’s women. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 30(5), p 400.

<sup>25</sup> Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Official website of the Peace Secretariat of the LTTE, (2003), [www.ltteps.org](http://www.ltteps.org)

<sup>26</sup> Jordan, "Birds of Freedom? Perspectives on Female Emancipation and Sri Lanka's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," 46.

<sup>27</sup> Paige Whaley Eager, *From Freedom Fighters to Terrorists: Women and Political Violence*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2008), 186.

was arrested when the plane landed in London.<sup>28</sup> One week later, the PFLP hijacked another aircraft and demanded the release of Khaled. In the end, the negotiation and release of Khaled was coerced after the PFLP blew up the three remaining hijacked aircraft and demanded the exchange of Khaled for the passengers. The Palestinian cause was broadcast around the globe and Khaled became a sex symbol for her cause and revolutionaries worldwide.<sup>29</sup> Despite this early example of a female filling a dominant role in Palestinian militant organizations<sup>30</sup>, female suicide bombers are a relatively new phenomenon across the region. The first recorded incident was in 1985 when Khyadali Sana killed two soldiers of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) in Lebanon. Sana was seventeen years old and a member of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party when she drove a car bomb into an IDF convoy.<sup>31</sup> Known as the —Bride of the South, the success of the attack carried out by Sana influenced more women to become terrorists.<sup>32</sup> Since then, women have increasingly become involved in terrorist organizations and have carried out a variety of terrorist attacks.

**The Black Widows:** This is a female terrorist organization that provided support in the struggle for Chechen independence. The organization developed their own unique uniform to distinguish themselves from regular Chechen rebel units that includes being completely dressed in black with a martyr's belt filled with explosives as a unique accessory.<sup>33</sup> It is widely believed that the term Black Widows comes from the fact that many of the women are widows or family members of individuals killed by the Russian military in Chechnya.<sup>34</sup> On June 7, 2000, KhavaBarayeva and Luisa Magomadova became known as the first Black Widows after they drove a truck into the headquarters of a Russian Special Forces detachment in the village of Alkhan Yurt in Chechnya.<sup>35</sup> They were not only female suicide bombers, but they were the first suicide bombers used during the Chechen conflict. The Chechen rebels have used females in terrorist roles to a great extent throughout the struggle against Russia, and it is estimated that 42 percent of Chechen suicide bombers have been women.<sup>36</sup> The organization gained widespread international attention after being significantly involved in the two largest hostage incidents associated with suicide terrorism. These two incidents were the takeover of the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow and the Beslan School in North Ossetia.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>29</sup> Eager, *From Freedom Fighters to Terrorists: Women and Political Violence*, 185.

<sup>30</sup> Debra D. Zedalis, "Beyond the Bombings: Analyzing Female Suicide Bombers," in *Female Terrorism and Militancy: Agency, Utility and Organization*, by Cindy D. Ness, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 49.

<sup>31</sup> Debra D. Zedalis, *Female Suicide Bombers*, Monograph, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 2.

<sup>32</sup> Yoram Schweitzer, *Female Suicide Bombers for God*. Tel Aviv Notes 88, (Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, October 9, 2003), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Ryan Chilcote, "Russia's 'Black Widows' Wreak Terror," CNN, (September 3, 2004), <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/europe/09/01/russia.widows/index.html>

<sup>34</sup> Jane's Intelligence Digest, *Deadlier Than the Male? Briefings*, (Surrey, U.K.: Jane's Information Group, 2003), 1.

<sup>35</sup> Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova, "Black Widows and Beyond," in *Female Terrorism and Militancy: Agency, Utility and Organization*, by Cindy D. Ness, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 100.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 100.

**The Rising Importance of Women in Terrorism:**

In the contemporary operating environment, it is becoming more advantageous and more acceptable for terrorist organizations to turn to females to enhance their ability to accomplish political or ideological objectives. Terrorist organizations actively recruit females for a variety of reasons, which include increasing the number of combatants, gaining a tactical advantage, generating media attention, and eliciting a distinctive psychological impact on an external audience.<sup>37</sup> Females can provide advantages to extremist organizations that are in serious need of a resurgence of resources or publicity to further or even continue their cause. Many organizations see the female gender as an untapped resource and are increasingly willing to make concessions in their ideology to include women in their ranks. Increasing female involvement is also a good recruiting technique for influencing males to join, since in many cultures women are a dominant influence in family life but are not allowed to be involved in the larger society. The Islamic religion also believes that women should not be involved in extremist activities and as a result males are shamed into participating, rather than allowing women to perform the cultural or religious responsibility of men.<sup>38</sup> The increasing role of women in terrorist organizations in many cases can be attributed to meet a need or a shortage within the organization. Terrorist organizations are struggling with a shortage of available personnel with so many males being captured, killed, or unwilling to support the cause.<sup>39</sup> Use of female terrorists also produces a tactical advantage, since they generally do not receive the same scrutiny by security forces on patrol or at gates or check points. Women have become a tactical innovation because they deviate from the established counterterrorist profiles and stereotypes.<sup>40</sup> Female terrorists also provide additional international media attention for a terrorist organization, since news of a woman killing or threatening to kill innocent civilians is socially a more remarkable event than one conducted by a man.

**Motivations of Women to Support Terrorism:**

**Grief or Revenge for Loss:** Grief is a significant motivation that draws wives, mothers, or daughters into extremist organizations. The loss of a dominant male figure in their lives has a tremendous emotional, physical and financial impact. In most cases, the loss of the loved one was a perceived injustice at the hands of a Western occupying nation in a country such as Afghanistan or Iraq. A predator strike into a remote village in Afghanistan or casualty from a U.S. operation in Iraq is difficult for a mother to understand, and extreme grief will often turn to the desire for revenge. Although personal tragedy or revenge is one of the most prevalent motivations for women to conduct or support terrorist activities, one must also allow that at least some women are motivated by belief or ideology.

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<sup>37</sup>Zedalis, "Beyond the Bombings: Analyzing Female Suicide Bombers," 50.

<sup>38</sup>Dickey, "Terror: Women of Al Qaeda," 29.

<sup>39</sup>Alisa Stack-O'Conner, —Picked Last: Women in Terrorism,|| Joint Forces Quarterly 44, 1st Quarter (2008), 98.

<sup>40</sup>Bloom, Women as Victims and Victimizers, (accessed March 13, 2016).



**Commitment to an Ideological Cause:** Women have the same dedication as their male counterparts to a cause such as freedom for the oppressed or equality for the underprivileged. It has been shown through previous research that even if women had a significant grievance or other emotional motivation, the bottom line was their belief in the cause they were fighting for and willingness to die so that political attention would be put on their people's suffering.<sup>41</sup> Although the societies they live in may not allow them to fill the same roles as men, they are no less a part of that society and can believe just as strongly in the social and cultural beliefs and values of the society. Religious and ethnic beliefs are often a touchstone for the motivation and commitment of females involved in terrorism.<sup>42</sup> An overwhelming desire to make significant changes to the current environment or ultimately achieve martyrdom led women to take drastic measures. Martyrdom is voluntarily accepting death to demonstrate the truth to nonbelievers and help facilitate proselytizing efforts.<sup>43</sup> Many women are drawn to terrorism to contribute to a cause that they believe in and this leads to females accepting martyrdom. Wafa al-Bas, an attempted suicide bomber, states, I love Allah, I love the land of Palestine and I am a member of Al-Aksa Brigades...my dream was to be a martyr. I believe in death...Since I was a little girl I wanted to carry out an attack.<sup>44</sup>

**Desire to Improve Social Status:** Female terrorists are often afforded an increase in their social status due to the position they hold within a terrorist organization.<sup>45</sup> Gaining equality with their male counterparts is a strong motivation to participate in terrorist activities. Many female terrorists view their cause and the subsequent violent acts as utopian and as a means to create a new society, not to restore a traditional way of life.<sup>46</sup> These liberal ideologies and the desire to elevate the status of females in society or to obtain opportunities for their children also provide the impetus to participate. Female terrorists are often motivated by violence, displacement, hunger, and lack of opportunities.

**Financial Hardship:** In addition to fueling grievances, the death of a husband, father or son can lead to a loss of economic support for an entire family. Women are often involved in terrorist activities to make up for this loss and support their families financially to provide basic subsistence requirements, including food and water. Women and children are the most

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<sup>41</sup> The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Female Suicide Terrorism - Consequences for Counter-Terrorism, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Zedalis, Female Suicide Bombers, 42.

<sup>43</sup> Mahan, Terrorism in Perspective, 53.

<sup>44</sup> Media Critiques, "Three Lessons from a Women Terrorist," Honest Reporting, (June 21, 2005), [http://www.honestreporting.com/articles/45884734/critiques/Three\\_Lessons\\_from\\_a\\_Woman\\_Terrorist.asp](http://www.honestreporting.com/articles/45884734/critiques/Three_Lessons_from_a_Woman_Terrorist.asp).

<sup>45</sup> Cindy D. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause." In Female Terrorism and Militancy: Agency, Utility and Organization, by Cindy D. Ness, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 17.

<sup>46</sup> Mahan, Terrorism in Perspective, 255.

impoverished demographic group in the world, leaving them as easy targets for terrorist organizations to recruit.<sup>47</sup>

**Personal or Family Shame:** Females will often join terrorist organizations as a way to reinvent themselves or to become pure again after an alleged sexual misconduct or a real sexual assault.<sup>48</sup> This category also includes examples of women who are married and are forcibly raped by acquaintances of their husbands to make them unfit as wives.<sup>49</sup>

**Protection of Self or Family:** Members of a population have many reasons to shelter terrorist organizations within their homes and villages. One motivation is that terrorist organizations often provide the basic security mechanism for local towns and villages. They often become the godfather or patriarch of a community, and will provide services and protection for supporters as long as they are loyal to the cause.<sup>50</sup>

### **Role of Females in Terrorism:**

Women willingly and unwillingly fill a variety of roles within terrorist organizations. These roles include providing moral and logistics support, spying, executing terrorist attacks, and providing leadership. They act as Sympathizers, Spies, Warriors and Dominant Forces. Sympathizers provide basic logistics support to terrorist organizations, including money, time, sewing, food, supplies, safe haven, and sex to males in the organization. Spies play a more active role, and undertake missions such as running messages, gathering intelligence, or serving as decoys for the terrorist organization. These roles are critical to the ability of a terrorist organization to function and further their political agenda. The reality for sympathizers and spies is that if the terrorist organization is able to implement change, these women are unlikely to see their role change in society or receive benefits. Often females with family members in the terrorist organization fill these roles when their father, husband, brother, or son joins a terrorist group. Female warriors and dominant forces operate in a significantly more active and even leadership role. Warriors are trained to use weapons, make bombs, and to execute terrorist events.

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<sup>47</sup>Miemie Winn Byrd and Gretchen Decker, "Why the U.S. Should Gender It's Counterterrorism Strategy," *Military Review* 88, no. 4 (2008): 97.

<sup>48</sup>Sitralega Maunaguru, "Gendering Tamil Nationalism: The Construction of 'Women' in Projects of Protest and Control," In *Unmaking the Nation: The Politics of Identity and History in Modern Sri Lanka*, by Pradeep Jeganathan and Qadri Ismail, (Colombo: Social Scientists Association of Sri Lanka, 1995), 171.

<sup>49</sup> Asian News International, "Al Qaeda Now Recruiting, Deploying Female Militants Across Europe,".

<sup>50</sup> Gabriela Rendon, —How to Change the Culture of Terrorism, | Citizens Against Terror, February 8, 2007, <http://citizensagainstterror.net/page/index/206>.

**Methods Used to Recruit Women into Terrorism:**

**Appeal to Ideology:** A call to action against a perceived injustice has the same draw to women as it does on men. Some claim women are often more interested in causing change since they have the most to gain from sweeping reforms to the political or ideological environment. Women are easily enlisted by a terrorist group that pretends to know what must be changed, that want to change it here and now, and that on the way to change allows women to manifest precisely those maternal-sacrificial qualities that for centuries constituted recognition of her identity.<sup>51</sup> There are also a growing number of individuals that support the belief that Jihad is an obligation for women as much as it is for men. Aliyya Mustafa Mubarak assembled a list of 67 women who according to her —fought in the wars of Prophet Muhammad or immediately afterward in the great Islamic conquests.<sup>52</sup>

**Targeting of Personal Relationships:** Women are often recruited into extremist organizations as a result of their relationship with a father, husband, brother, or son. These women usually come from a highly patriarchal society which expects them to obey men and never question their judgment. This oppressive control makes it very easy for females to be recruited into terrorist organizations since they must follow the decisions made by male family members. Females also may choose to follow a friend, boyfriend or lover into a terrorist organization, and this devotion to another person is often the only reason for their involvement.<sup>53</sup>

**Emotional Coercion:** Causing shame is another prevalent technique used by terrorist organizations to coerce women to support their cause. In many cultures, Islam has a very strict view on what is acceptable behavior for women. Women that are considered soiled or damaged goods are easy targets for terrorist organizations to recruit since they are shunned from society. There are cases of militants marrying women and allowing other militants to rape them. The dishonor and rejection experienced by women makes them susceptible to recruitment or even forcible coercion by a terrorist organization to be used as suicide bombers.<sup>54</sup>

**Internet Campaigns:** The internet is a growing resource for terrorist organizations to recruit females to extremist activities. Websites educate women about how they can become more involved in ideological causes and provide support to those already involved in terrorism. These websites provide women specific instructions on providing medical care to wounded mujahideen in twelve specific areas including resuscitation, applying a tourniquet, and treating gunshot wounds.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Luisella De Cataldo Neuberger, Tiziana Valentini, and Jo Campling, *Women and Terrorism*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996), 85.

<sup>52</sup> David Cook, "Women Fighting in Jihad?" In *Female Terrorism and Militancy: Agency, Utility and Organization*, by Cindy D. Ness, 37-49, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 38.

<sup>53</sup> Bloom, *Women as Victims and Victimizers*.

<sup>54</sup> Asian News International, "Al Qaeda Now Recruiting, Deploying Female Militants Across Europe,".

<sup>55</sup>Bakier, "Jihadis Provide Internet Training for Female Mujahideen," 1.

**Conclusion :**

*“No one who understands the feminist movement, or who knows the soul of a real woman would make the mistake of supposing that the modern woman is fighting because she wants to be a man. That idea is the invention of masculine intelligence. Woman is fighting today, as she has all the way through the ages, for the freedom to be a woman.”.....Anne B. Hamman.*

Women are increasingly involved with terrorist organizations that have and will continue to target the United States and the Western way of life. Female involvement has distorted the prevailing profile used by the U.S. and other countries of the typical terrorist. The U.S. government, the general public, and especially the military must adjust their perceptions of the demographics of terrorism. Failure to include gender in the development of counterterrorism strategy leads to an incomplete plan that could result in disastrous consequences. Female participation in terrorist organizations exponentially raises the threat due to an increase in the number of combatants, an asymmetrical tactical advantage, added international media attention, and a distinctive psychological impact on an external audience.<sup>56</sup> Women will continue to participate at all levels of extremist organizations and the U.S. government must not ignore the role of females in counterterrorism strategy. Failure to implement significant changes could lead to more females joining extremist organizations and an increase in the exploitation of women by terrorist groups. The World Bank states that educating women increases their productivity on the farm and in the factory but also results in greater labor force participation, later marriage, lower fertility, and greatly improved child health and nutrition.<sup>57</sup> Women should be treated as equals in the political process, although this is in direct conflict with the religious and traditional role of women in many parts of the world.

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<sup>56</sup>Zedalis, "Beyond the Bombings: Analyzing Female Suicide Bombers," 50.

<sup>57</sup>Michael P.Todaro and Stephen C. Smith, Economic Development, (Boston, MA: Addison- Wesley, 2008), 377.