



# Suicide In Palestine

*Nadia Taysir Dabbagh*

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## **Suicide In Palestine** Nadia Taysir Dabbagh

This book is the first anthropological study of suicide in the contemporary Arab world. It discusses the effects of life under the Israeli occupation on the mental health of young Palestinians, using selected case studies of men and women who attempted suicide in the West Bank, above all in Ramallah, but also in Jenin.

This is not a book about martyrs, or those who gain so much media attention by dying for a "holy cause"; rather, it concerns those who wish to die for entirely private reasons. Contrary to wider expectations, fatal suicide levels in Palestinian society remain low compared with Western norms, notwithstanding the many stress factors that contribute to suicidal behavior in the West, including unemployment and social deprivation. In particular, suicide is found to be contrary to the concept of Palestinian identity, of a people under siege for whom resistance is paramount, rather than succumbing to depression or despair.

Above all, Nadia Dabbagh's findings bear out the salience of what she calls "the ripple effects of war." Her research was carried out after the first intifada, during a so-called "peace-building" period, but her research clearly bears out the trauma of Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories. The stories she collected mirror the disillusionment of many Palestinians who had hoped that their lives would improve once fighting subsided and the Palestinian National Authority had been established.

The book aims to foster an understanding of suicide in the Islamic world, looking at current and historical attitudes to death and self-killing in Islamic or Arab thought. The distinction between suicide and martyrdom is explored in detail, as are current preconceptions of these phenomena in the Muslim world.

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