THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW, ETHICS AND CIVILIZATION

Issues in Contemporary Interdisciplinary Discourse

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Islamic Perspective of Suicide Attack: Concepts, Causes and Effects

Md. Yousuf Ali

Introduction

As a term and a concept, “suicide” is not a new phenomenon in human history because it affects every aspect of human life. In contemporary society, widespread suicide attacks and their lethal consequences pose a strategic threat to the security, stability and well-being of human society. While suicide, or self-annihilation in any form, is generally prohibited in all religions, some quarters try to justify it on religious grounds. Islam does not allow suicide attacks in any form, but encourages one to strive for safeguarding the basic human rights and defending the religion with freedom and tolerance. Islam strongly forbids suicide or self-killing in any form in the name of God or religion.1 Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), neither encouraged nor permitted any of his companions to commit suicide. Though suicide attack is foreign in Islamic history and theology, some scholars largely from western intelligentsia condemn Islam and Muslims as perpetrators of suicide attacks.

In this context, there is a need to identify the causes of suicide and examine its Islamic stance. The chapter will examine a historical survey of suicide attacks, causes and factors of suicide attacks, and finally present the Islamic perspective on the issue. The paper also briefly reviews the responses of Muslim scholars with a textual analysis and inductive approach to analyze the prospects of formulating an Islamic stance on suicide attack in modern context. It is hoped that the ideas raised will ultimately contribute to an understanding and clarifying the Islamic stance of suicide attacks for both Muslims and non-Muslim communities in contemporary society.