Save the Nation
– The construction of martyrs and martyrdom. A discourse analysis of interviews with Palestinian students from the West Bank.

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Abstrakt

This bachelor’s thesis is written in English. However, it also includes an abstract in Swedish because of guidelines from the university.


Abstract

This bachelor’s thesis studies the construction of martyrs and martyrdom in Palestine. The study uses a discourse analysis to analyse data gathered from focus group interviews with Palestinian university students in the West Bank. Observations in the West Bank are also used to an enhanced understanding of the production. The theoretical framework of the thesis is based upon thoughts about nations and nationalism. The theoretical framework is connected to the Palestinian nation and nationalism to comprehend how martyrs and martyrdom are constructed in Palestine. The analysis is divided into five chapters: The first chapter discusses the importance of martyrs and martyrdom in Palestine. In the second chapter, tributes to martyrs are discussed. The meaning of martyrs and martyrdom are analysed in an abstract way in the third chapter, which focuses on martyrs’ ideology and ethical considerations. The fourth chapter analyses the construction of martyrs and martyrdom trough concrete Palestinian examples. The last chapter discusses martyrs and martyrdom in a non-Palestinian Arabic/Islamic context, the chapter analyses non-territorial communities. Conclusions that are drawn, are that martyrs and martyrdom have no meaning, instead the phenomena are constructed in different ways depending on what discourse it is that produces martyrs and martyrdom. Three main discourses are found. The first and strongest is the Palestinian nationalism. The other are Islam and Arab, that influence and are influenced by the Palestinian nationalism. Furthermore, martyrs and martyrdom are constructed as morally/ethically good and innocent, the phenomena also produced good and innocence to the Palestinian nation.

Keywords

Martyr, martyrdom, nation, nationalism, Palestine.
Preface

While I am writing this sentence, I am sitting in the University, at the same place that I was before traveling to Palestine. When I was thinking:” What have I gotten myself into?”. Now, it was less than a week left until three friends and I were going begin our journey to Palestine. At this time, two months after the return from Palestine, I am once again sitting at the same place in the University. However, the noxiousness that influenced me before the journey is gone. Instead, I feel no regrets at all. The time in Palestine is something that I will never forget and that has changed me.

I would like to thank everyone who has supported me during my time in Palestine and with the bachelor’s thesis. Without the support, the thesis nor the time in Palestine would have been possible. I would like to direct special gratitude to: Firstly, my supervisor Sara Ahlstedt from Linköping’s University, a positive and motivating professor. Secondly, Massad, who vastly helped me organize interviews in Palestine. Thirdly, the organisation which I went through to implement the study. Fourthly, the refugee camp that the organisation was based at, a camp with helpful and good people that deserve so much more. Fifthly, Anna Rubio Lind a professor at the Linne University, who supported and advised my friends and I before and during our time in Palestine. Lastly, I would like to thank the participants, who granted me the honour to listen to their stories about Palestine and martyrdom.

Thank you!
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Introduction

“How beautiful for the splinters of my bones to be the response that blows the enemy up, not for the love of killing, but so that we can live as others. We do not sing the songs of death, but recite the hymns of life. We die so future generations may live.” -Mohammed Al-Ghoul

The quote above is from the will of Mohammed Al-Ghoul who died at the “Jerusalem operation” in 2002. The goal of the operation was to kill Israeli soldiers and himself, at the same time. The operation was a response to the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

The Israeli occupation has developed under the nineties until now, by the founding of Israel on Palestinian territory, and during wars and conflicts between Arab states and Israel (see nations and nationalism). Banat Bassam argues that Palestinians are oppressed physically and psychologically in the occupation. Palestinian land and water are confiscated, houses are destroyed, and Israeli raids in occupied Palestinian towns are common. Because of the occupation, development of social and economic elements in the Palestinian society come in second hand. Instead, in the occupation, resisting and surviving is the priority. The priority, resisting, exist as implied before, in the martyrdom phenomenon. Becoming, being, and constructing martyrs is a form of resistance. Since 1990, the martyrdom phenomenon has expanded in the Palestinian nation. Because of the high relevance of martyrs and martyrdom in the occupation and the Palestinian nation, the subject needs to be studied. Furthermore, a problem regarding martyrs and martyrdom exist that strengthens why the subject should undergo a study. The problem is that there is a gap in how martyrs are defined in this thesis and how they sometimes are constructed in previous research. The gap between my analysis and previous studies are presented in the three following head chapters.

In this thesis, I study the construction of martyrs and martyrdom in Palestine. To better understand the construction of martyrs and martyrdom in Palestine, I also study the Palestinian nation and nationalism, because it is in the frames of the Palestinian nation that martyrs and martyrdom are constructed in Palestine.

Purpose and research questions

The purpose of the thesis is to study the meaning and the construction of martyrs and martyrdom in the Palestinian nation. Previous research in the martyrs and martyrdom field is mostly asking who the martyr is and why martyrdom operations exist. However, the meaning of the complex phenomenon itself and how it is constructed, often comes in

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1 Linda M. Pitcher, “The Divine Impatience”: Ritual, Narrative, and Symbolization in the Practice of Martyrdom in Palestine”, Medical Anthropology Quarterly 12(1) 1998 page. 27
2 Bassam Yousef Ibrahim Banat, “The Profile of the Palestinian Suicide Martyrs (Istihhadiyin)” European Scientific Journal, vol 11, No 5, 2015, page. 18
3 Banat, page. 18
second hand. The following questions are discussed in the analysis to answer the purpose of the thesis:

- How do the participants construct the meaning of martyrs and martyrdom?
- Why do the participants construct the meaning of martyrs and martyrdom in the way they do?

To achieve the purpose and answer the research questions, this bachelor’s thesis uses a discourse analysis to analyse primary data collected during my field visit in the West Bank. The data was collected by observations and mostly by two focus group interviews, which included participants who are young male Palestinian university students from the West Bank.

The scope of the study

The goal of this thesis is to present the construction of martyrs and martyrdom in Palestine. However, this is not possible, because the data is only based on the statements of participants from two focus groups, and observations. Because of the data, the scope of this bachelor’s thesis is limited to present the production of martyrs and martyrdom in Palestine from only two focus groups and observations. The results of the analysis can present parts of how martyrs and martyrdom are constructed in Palestine, yet it cannot present the whole picture because the data is not vast enough.

Terms and Concepts

Martyrs and martyrdom

I define martyrs to be persons who died for a political cause or by a political cause and martyrdom is the circumstances of the martyrs. The editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica define martyrs as people who choose death rather than wrongdoing their religion, its values and beliefs. The Islamic definition of martyrs is either persons who died in Jihad (holy war) or who died wrongly. The Islamic/Arabic word for martyrs is Shaheed and means “witness”. Furthermore, martyrs can also be explained through a non-religious perspective. Martyrs can be people who die, or sacrifice something of great value to them, for a cause. In both religious and non-religious circumstances martyrs are honoured and deemed holy, by the religion or/and by the cause.⁴ Ahmed M. Abdel-Khalek defines martyrdom as an act that serves to bring freedom for the martyrs’ homeland by killing the enemy, and is strongly connected to Jihad and Islam. Martyrs know that they will die during the act.⁵ However, in my analysis I argue that: firstly, martyrs are not mainly

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⁵Ahmed M. Abdel-Khalek, “Neither Altruistic Suicide nor Terrorism but Martyrdom: A Muslim perspective”, Archives of Suicide Research Vol.8 (1) 2014, page. 100
produced as people who know that they will die in an act that they implement. Secondly, martyrdom is not mainly constructed as a religious phenomenon, it is rather produced as a nationalistic phenomenon that is influenced by religion.

**Previous research**

Previous research is based on the research field of martyrs and martyrdom. The field of martyrs and martyrdom is not only bound to Palestine and includes different disciplines such as: religion, history, terrorism, nationalism, medicine, and politics (Daphne Burdman 2003, Daniel Boyarin 1999, David Cook 2007, Mohammed M. Hafez 2007, Glen Warren Bowersock 2002, Ami Pedahzur 2006 (red.), Jan Willem Van Hentern and Friedrich Avemarie 2002, Clodagh Tait 2001). The field of martyrs and martyrdom that is used in this bachelor’s thesis is demarcated to martyrs and martyrdom in Palestine. The literature above is not used to analyse the production of martyrs and martyrdom. Instead it serves as a short overview of the martyrs and martyrdom field. The following articles (presented below) that serve as previous research give me a deeper understanding of martyrs and martyrdom. The articles both strengthen my ideas about martyrs and martyrdom, and open for new ways of thinking.

Previous research shows that the Palestinian nation is highly influenced by the occupation. Helga Tawil-Souri argues that the Palestinian culture cannot be separated from politics. Furthermore, in one article, Salaman Elbedour, David T. Bastein and Bruce A. Center state that the national identity of Palestine is mostly influenced by the intifada/occupation. Previous research also shows that the occupation and its effect on the national identity/culture of Palestine is a reason why martyrs and martyrdom exist in Palestine. Linda M. Pitcher states that resisting the occupation brings satisfaction and self-control for Palestinians while the occupation alienates them. Furthermore, Bassam Yousef Ibrahim Banat argues that nationalistic motives for resistance are the most common for martyrs, while religious come in second hand. Lori Allen agrees with Pitcher and Banat, stating that the occupation is a reason for martyrs. However, nationalistic, religious, economical, 

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9 Pitcher, pages. 14ff

10 Banat, pages. 25ff
phycological aspects, nor the praising of martyrs in Palestine are alone the main motives for martyrs. No aspect by itself is “the reason” why martyrs exist.11 Lastly, previous research also shows that the occupation of Palestine and the reasons behind martyrs are not only bound to Israel and Palestine. Rather explanations need to include an international perspective. In one study, Guss, Tuason, and Teixeira argue that the United States is a part of the occupation because of its close partnership with Israel and its support of Israel in the occupation.12 From of the previous research above, martyrs and martyrdom are understood as something that are constructed in the occupation of the Palestine. The Palestinian nation is also constructed and reconstructed by the occupation.

The research of this thesis is valuable because of three reasons: the first reason is based on confusion regarding martyrs and martyrdom. As mentioned before, from the analysis of the interviews, martyrs and martyrdom are not fully understood in line with: Abdel-Khalek’s definition. Furthermore, previous research that is presented above, mostly portrays martyrs as people who die voluntary in an attack against Israel, for example by suicide attacks. I do not argue that the previous research means that martyrs and martyrdom are only connected to suicide fighters, but that the focus is on suicide fighters and the results of their studies produces a “suicide discourse”. From the conclusions based on the analyse of the interviews, I argue that martyrs are not mainly perceived as suicide fighters. They are rather constructed by my participants as people that died unwillingly. Furthermore, the participants do not have a clear definition of martyrs and martyrdom. Instead, they discussed it and more than once the participants did not reach the same conclusions in the focus groups. The participants themselves are unsure of the meaning of martyrs and martyrdom.

Another reason why this thesis is valuable is that there is a lack of Palestinian perspectives on diverse Palestinian subjects internationally, according to Tawil-Souri. For example, a Palestinian perspective on what the meaning of martyrdom is. Continuously, Tawil-Souri argues that the ones who mostly present the meaning of Palestinian concepts, factors, phenomena (martyrs/martyrdom) and so forth, are for example: international media, non-Palestinian Arab states, Israel, or/and International researchers. Tawil-Souri would not argue that I can construct a “real” Palestinian perspective, because I am not Palestinian thus I cannot construct a Palestinian discourse. However, the analysis and conclusion are based on a Palestinian perspective because the reflections are drawn on interviews with Palestinians. I argue that I present a Palestinian perspective that is constructed by my participants. Furthermore, there are also actors that construct the Palestinian concepts and so forth, in a negative way that does not match the outcome of my analysis. Manuel Hassassian argues that the Palestinian national struggle (which martyrs/martyrdom is a

11 Lori Allen, “There Are Many Reasons Why: Suicide Bomber and Martyrs in Palestine”, Middle East Research and Information Project, Inc. No. 223, Summer 2002, pages. 34ff
part of) is partly constructed by Israel’s media and government. The media and the
government produces the phenomena as “terrorism”, which can mislead global politics on
how to interpret the Palestinian struggle. The last reason of why my study is vital is
because martyrdom is present among every Palestinians’ life and mind according to
Pitcher and my observations in Palestine.

Theoretical framework

Nation and nationalism

Theories about the nation and nationalism are used to understand martyrs and martyrdom
and to connect martyrs and martyrdom to a larger discourse. The theoretical framework
was chosen after the coding process of the data was completed. During the coding process,
I interpreted the nation and nationalism as vital regarding the construction of martyrs and
martyrdom. This chapter includes both a general discussion about nations and
nationalism, and a part that is more focused on the Palestinian nation and nationalism.

Margaret Moore writes that nations are national communities. A community does however
not always have to be national. Other communities exist too, such as religious and ethnic
communities. A national community, a nation, includes a population and a territory
according to Sverker Sörlin. However, a population in an area does not by itself make the
area a nation. If a Palestinian group lived in an area in Sweden then the territory would not
become a Palestinian nation.

A nation can be divided into a political and an ethnic
definition. Both factors construct the nation and bind the population to a nation. Ethnic
factors are for example, common memories, myths, traditions, customs, language, and
behaviours. Political aspects are: citizenship, rights, obligations, and a common publicity.
The philosophy of modernism means that symbols and rites are vital, because they
produce a cultural community that binds the nation. Furthermore, Sörlin states that Max
Weber examined nations and disclosed that there are no factors that can define why they
exist. Weber means that nations have throughout time had different meanings, and diverse
factors that have bound them together. Nations are constructed and reconstructed, with
for example ethnic and political aspects, but none factor is absolute. Thus, nations are
made up yet real. Benedict Andersson states that he does not fully agree with the thought
that nations are made up from nowhere, nor does he argue that nations are naturally
produced. Anderson states that nations are not invented (made up), they are imagined. All
inhabitants of a nation will probably never meet each other face to face, to construct a

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http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=793 (Received: 2017-05-22)
14 Pitcher, page. 18
15 Margaret Moore, *Ethics of nationalism* (New York) pages. 5ff
16 Sverker Sörlin, *Nationalism* (Stockholm 2006) page. 17
17 Sörlin, page. 21f
18 Sörlin, pages. 79f
nation. Instead the nation and its population is imagined by the individual. Yet, this imagination can construct a strong bond and friendship among the population which can make inhabitants willing to die for each other.19 However, nationalist argue that the nation is naturally constructed. That nations are made from a series of historical destined events.20 Continuously, that nations are always linked to a historical nation, yet for example: Syria’s territory has nothing to do with the ancient Assyrian homeland.21 Nationalism is according to Sörlin the ideology of the nation. Sörlin writes that radical nationalism interprets the people as a political power. According to radical nationalism, the nation is a political community that needs to strive for freedom and independence.22

Barbara-Ann J. Rieffer states that classical thinkers regarding nations and nationalism such Benedict Andersson, Eric Hobsbawm, and Ernest Gellner explain that nations are formed by the industrialization, technology development, and by a shared culture.23 Andersson also writes that a language is a vital element for a nation, a common language constructs the nation.24 However, Rieffer argues that religion is, in diverse nations and nationalism, the most important aspect. She argues that Hobsbawm, Gellner, and Andersson have neglected the theory that religion is a vital factor in nations and nationalism.25 A religious community gives the participants moral codes on how to live and how to behave.26 Moore also argues that nations are shaped by ethics and moral. Collective and “objective” goods exist in a nation.27 Furthermore, Rieffer states that nationalism can be influenced by religion on three levels. Thus, little, medium, or a lot. In this thesis, the last level is interesting. The last level is religious nationalism. In this case, religion and nationalism cannot be divided. The nation adapts diverse religious factors such as a religious language.28 Religious nationalism often exist in places where a group is oppressed by a bipolar group. For example, Israel oppresses Palestinians and do not grant Palestinians a nation, partly because of the Palestinian religion (Islam). In this case, the religious nationalism seeks independence for its nation and acceptance for its religion.29 The construction of bipolar groups is common in religious nationalism where the nationalism often wages conflicts against the opposite group. The religious nationalism produces a group that excludes people/groups that are not the same, for example minority groups or the bipolar group. Furthermore, it also grants inclusion for the ones who are the

19 Benedict Andersson, Den Föreställda Gemenskapen (Uddevalla 1996) page. 21f
20 Sörlin, page. 30
21 Sörlin, page. 23f
22 Sörlin, page. 44
24 Andersson, page. 55
25 Rieffer, pages. 219ff
26 Rieffer, pages. 217f
27 Moore, page. 38
28 Rieffer, pages. 224f
29 Rieffer, pages. 226
same and follow moral codes of the national religious community. There are many codes of morality and ethics in the Quran, below I present three moral codes. Al fatiha, the first sura, paragraph six, implies that god should lead the people to the “right” path. Al kafirun, sura CIX, constructs two bipolar groups, where the “we” is included in Islam, and the “them” is excluded. Lastly, Al mumtahina, paragraph 8, states that one should be good against people who do not harm you because of one’s religion and who do not try to cast one out from hers/his homeland.

Sörlin states that in 1917 the superpowers of the times declared their aims to make the Palestinian territory into Israel. In 1948 the Israeli nation was proclaimed. Consequently, wars in 1949 and 1967 broke out between Israel and Arab states. The wars resulted in a loss for the Arab states and a further occupation of Palestine. In 1917 and during the wars, the pan Arabism, a transnational Arabic nationalistic movement, got radicalized. The pan Arabism was constructed because of the French and English colonization of Arabic nations. The Arab nationalism has also been influenced by Islam, Sörlin states that Islam and nationalism are commonly instrumentalised in fights for freedom and independence that are ongoing in the Arabic states. Hassassian states that Palestinian nationalism have been influenced by interior and exterior actors and through a time of conflicts. Three main factors that have formed the national identity are pan Arabism, fights against Zionism/Israel, and Islam. However, according to As’ad Ghanem, a united Palestinian nation or government does not exist. Instead there is a split in the Palestinian nation, for example, between the leading parties: Islamic Hamas and nationalistic Fatah. Yet there is one factor that unites Palestinians, which is the fight against Israel. The struggle against the occupation is the most vital fight for Palestinians. Since Hamas leads in Gaza according to Nadia Naser-Najib, thus making Islamism bigger in Gaza, the Palestinian nation and martyrdom would probably be connected to Islam even more if I did the interviews in Gaza. However, Islam is not the only religion in Palestine. Coffey Quinn states that the Palestinian population consists of 0,98% Christians and there are 1,55% Christians in the West Bank. In 1948, 70% of the Christian population was removed by the Israeli occupation.

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30 Rieffer, page. 234
31 Translated by Besim Korkut, Kur'an s pevredom [The Quran] (Medina 1995), page. 1
32 The Quran, page. 603
33 The Quran, page. 550
34 Sverker Sörlin, Nationalism (Stockholm 2006) pages. 57ff
35 Sörlin, pages. 79f
36 As’ad Ghanem, “Palestinian Nationalism: An Overview”, Israel Studies Vol. 18 N. 2 2013, pages. 26f
37 Hassassian
38 Dr Nadia Naser-Najib, ” Between Myth and Reality, The Palestinian Political Elite and the Two State Solution”, Holy Land Studies 13.2 2014 page. 142
39 Coffey Quinn, The political, communal and religious dynamics of Palestinian Christian identity: the Eastern Orthodox and Latin Catholics in the West Bank (2016-11) https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/9598 (Received: 2017-06-08) page. 220
40 Coffey, page. 178
The study field of nations and nationalism is vast. There are many different theories of how
nations and nationalism should be understood. The perspectives above do not present all
theories on nations and nationalism, nor are they not criticized by other theories.
Nonetheless, the perspectives above are presented because they inspired me on how to
understand the Palestinian nation and nationalism.

Method

Data collection and participants

The data for this study was collected through focus group interviews (and observations, see
below) with Palestinian university students. Two focus group interviews have been carried
out, each with eight participants and each lasting between an hour and an hour and a half.
The gathering was carried out in the West Bank. There are two reasons for the choice of
location. Firstly, I find it most relevant to interview Palestinians in Palestine because I
want to analyse the constructions of martyrs and martyrdom in Palestine. Secondly,
choosing the West Bank, more specific, Palestinian university students in the West Bank,
was a comfort selection. The organisation that assisted me in Palestine and that I went
through to implement my research was based in the West Bank. Furthermore, the reason
why the participants where university students was because it was easiest for Massad (se
further down) to gather university students to the focus groups. Interviewing the
participants in focus groups was chosen because I found it relevant for my research.
Victoria Wibeck describes a focus group as an interview that includes multiple participants
who discuss different subjects. Among other things, focus groups can be used to study
attitudes, perceptions, and values. Bente Halkier writes that the focus group method is
favourable when studying phenomena, norms, perceptions, and so forth, of a group.
Because I in my thesis, study the construction of martyrs and martyrdom (phenomena) in
the Palestinian nation (a group) from the Palestinian nation’s perspective (Palestinian
group perspective), I deem the focus group method as favourable. The intention of this
study is not to present one person’s individual perspective on martyrs and martyrdom.
Instead, it is to show the Palestinian perspective, therefore interviewing more than one
person at the same time is better because the participants construct the phenomena
together.

In my focus groups, I did not include a “real” assistant but there was one “half assistant”.
The “half assistant” was Massad (anonymised name). The reason why Massad is named a
“half assistant” is because he both organized the interviews with me and partook in the
focus groups as an interview person. Massad was a volunteer at the organization in
Palestine that I went through to implement the data gathering. Massad was the one who

41 Victoria Wibeck, Fokusgrupper: Om fokuserade gruppintervjuer som undersökningsmetod (Lund 2010)
42 Bente Halkier, Fokusgrupper (Malmö 2010)
assembled participants for the interviews. Thus, the method of snowball sampling has been actualized. Snowball sampling is when one person or a small number of people are used to gather more participants for interviews. Massad was given extra information about the study which was not the case with other participants. The information was about the kind of participants I wanted (English speaking and youth), purpose, and my concern regarding the sensitive subject (se ethical discussion). When I shared information about the study to Massad, more questions were brought up regarding the thesis. Because of Massad’s helpfulness I chose to answer Massad’s questions.

The participants that Massad gathered knew each other a bit before entering the focus groups. Wibeck writes that people who know each other can easier discuss a sensitive topic, thus it is easier to discuss a sensitive subject in an already existing group. Furthermore, Wibeck states that the focus group method is useful when studying a sensitive topic (both with and without a previously existing group), because it is easier to talk about a sensitive subject in a group than one on one. A negative aspect with an already existing group is according to Wibeck, that some things might be taken for granted in the group and therefore not told. Thus, important information may be left untold.

The first interview was carried out at a public area while the other interview was completed in a private area. Wibeck states that persons find it more comfortable to interact and participate in focus groups that are held in a closed area. Difference regarding how the participants interacted in the focus groups was noticed in the interviews. In the focus group that was done in a public/open area (a public area next to the university), less participants frequently expressed their thoughts. While in the focus group that was fulfilled in a private/closed area (in one of the participants home) more participants expressed their thoughts more frequently. The consequence of having a focus group where fewer participants frequently speak is that lesser participants produce the discourse and meaning of martyrs and martyrdom. At the beginning, the interview that was completed in an open area was supposed to be fulfilled in a closed area. However, last second changes made impossible to hold the interview in a private area (permission was withdrawn by the manager/owner of the closed area) and therefore the location changed to an open area.

In both interviews the participants begun to express their thoughts more frequently and became less nervous after around 30 minutes. However, this did not mean that I interpret that the participants were very nervous and shy in the beginning of the focus groups. Nonetheless, after about 30 minutes the participants got closer to each other and began speaking about extra sensitive subjects in the frames of the sensitive theme martyrs and martyrdom. Thus, the participants got more comfortable with each other after around 30 minutes.

43 Alan Bryman, Samhällsvetenskapliga metoder (Malmö 2011) page. 196
44 Wibeck, pages. 65f
45 Wibeck, page. 150
46 Wibeck, pages. 65f
47 Wibeck, page. 32
minutes. A consequence of more participants speaking is that more perspectives are produced. However, it also resulted in that a person’s perspective got denied by the rest of the group a few times. The dialogue in a focus group can often become argumentative according to Wibeck.\(^48\) When the discussion became argumentative, the participants often rose their voices and began being emotional. Furthermore, when the dialogue became argumentative, participants could change their thoughts back and forward. Wibeck writes that when the participants perspectives collide with other ideas, then the participant’s thoughts might change.\(^49\) Both Wibeck and Halkier argue that people may agree with the group in fear of being excluded.\(^50\) Massad’s role of being a “half assistant” had an impact on the interviews (mostly the first interview). Massad had a habit of summarizing and concluding the discussion of the focus group. Furthermore, Massad spoke frequently and gained a central role in the interview. I interpret that the other participants interpreted Massad’s statements as smart. Wibeck writes that the acting and personality of a participant can make the person an intellectual of the group, which makes other participants unconsciously agree with hers/his ideas.\(^51\)

The participants in the interviews were all male. However, the participants were never asked to identify their sex and it is therefore defined by me. To only include males in the interviews was not desirable nor undesirable. Rather it was an outcome of the selection of the participants. Massad did requested both sexes in the first interview but only males attended. Including other sexes in the focus groups might impact the interviews and the data produced. Because other discourse might have been constructed. The age of the participants ranged between 18 and 26. Selecting Palestinian youth was a comfort selection. It was easier to gather youth than adults. All participants were Palestinians living in the West Bank. The focus group interviews were done in English which presumably had an impact on the participants’ dialogue, because their first language is Arabic. Yet, the participants spoke English well. However, two found it harder to speak English than other participants. Nonetheless, after transcribing the interviews it can be noted that only small parts of the interviews are hard for me to understand because of language barriers. Furthermore, one should not misunderstand that this thesis is written in English because of that the interviews where in English. The main reason why this thesis is in English is because it enables the thesis to be read by an international audience which includes the participants and other Palestinian individuals and organisations.

A semi structured interview guide was used in the focus groups. According to Bryman, in semi structured interviews the interviewer has a flexible interview guide with rather general questions that might be added, removed, and/or asked in any order.\(^52\) The used

\(^{48}\) Wibeck, page. 35  
\(^{49}\) Wibeck, page. 35  
\(^{50}\) Wibeck, pages. 29f, Halkier, pages. 10ff  
\(^{51}\) Wibeck, pages. 29f  
\(^{52}\) Bryman, page. 206
guide had seven main questions plus some alternative and follow up questions. However, not all questions were asked because one question could produce a long discussion which answered several questions. New questions were also formed during the interviews out of the participant’s answers. Some questions were removed after the first interview because they served no purpose. A semi structured interview schedule was used because the purpose of the focus group interviews was to start a dialogue among the participants by asking a question and letting the participants speak without constantly being interrupted by me. Yet, at the same time the semi structured interviews gives me the option to guide the focus groups dialogue and to ask planned questions. Letting the participant speak “freely” gives them the opportunity to by themselves construct martyrs and martyrdom. However, if the discussion in the focus group would turn into a dialogue about a subject not related to the purpose of my thesis, then I had the option to guide the interview back to the theme of the thesis, with questions.

Expect focus groups, participatory observations have been completed. Oscar Pripp and Magnus Öhlander mean that in observations, actions can be studied. Furthermore, the observations can be used to compare with for example: interviews. Observations which I implemented include happenings and phenomena which occurred in Palestine that I have attended/witnessed. In some of the happenings and phenomena that I attended/witnessed, I brought material to take notes. However, most of the happenings/phenomena occurred unplanned and I therefore took notes afterward. I interpret my whole visit in Palestine as an observation. The observations are used to support the discourse analysis.

**Discourse analysis**

This thesis includes a discourse analysis that is used to analyse data from the interviews. The reason why I choose discourse analysis was because I wanted to analyse how martyrs and martyrdom are made in Palestine and what the consequences of the production are. Marianne Winther Jorgensen and Louise Phillips state that discourse means a way of speaking and understanding the world or parts of the world. The language gives subjects a meaning according to Eva Bolander and Andreas Fejes, for example the language constructs a meaning of martyrs and martyrdom. The meaning is however not absolute, its shifts depending on what discourse that is producing the meaning. Bolander and Fejes state that a discourse analysis can be used to identify what truths that are constructed in speeches and texts. The vital part of discourse analysis is not to show what discourses there are in the text, instead the focus is on how discourses are constructed, what

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53 Oscar Pripp, Magnus Öhlander, "Observation", *Etnologiskt fältarbete* (red.) Lars Kaijser, Magnus Öhlander (Lund 2014) pages. 114f
54 Marianne Winther Jorgensen, Louise Phillips, *Diskursanalys som teori och metod* (Lund 2015) page. 7
55 Eva Bolander, Andreas Fejes, "Diskursanalys", *Handbok i kvalitativ analys* (red.) Andreas Fejes, Robert Thornberg (Stockholm 2015) page. 92
56 Bolander, Fejes, page. 90
discourses do, and what consequences there are out of certain discourses. The focus in my discourse analyse is therefore not to name the discourses that exist but to show how the discourses function. However, this does not mean that I will not at all point out what main discourses there are (see discussion). Except the description above of what is important in a discourse analysis, I am also influenced by following questions that Fejes and Bolander have formed. The questions are: what is it about [the data/theme]? How is it spoken about? What is produced as the truth? The definition above regarding a discourse analyse has inspired my discourse analysis. However, I have also been inspired by Merete Watt Boolsen’s method (see further down).

The upper description of discourse might seem like an “open”/not strict method. For some this may be an unclear strategy that does not show exactly how the analysis is fulfilled, which may be criticised. Continuously, my discourse method might me further criticised because I do not use “classic” discourse methods, for example methods and concepts developed by Norman Fairclough, Chantel Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, Michel Foucault, or the method of discourse psychology. I acknowledge the critique. However, it does not mean that I have not sought to analyse discourses and the construction of martyrs and martyrdom. Instead, I argue that the method I choose is fitting. An “open” discourse analysis is used because it leaves room for me to analyse “how I want” in the frames of a discourse analysis. It allows me to take charge of the analysis work and to analyse what I rate as vital for the understanding of the construction of martyrs and martyrdom. I argue that strict discourse methods and concepts would make it harder for me to fulfil my analysis. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that the methods of Fairclough, Laclau and Mouffe, and so forth, are valuable, yet they did not fit my analysis this time.

Bolander and Fejes write that it is important to know that the analyst is a part of the discourses that are studied. I cannot separate myself from the discourse, instead when read about the subject, the discourse influences me- Perspectives and truths that are produced affect me. Furthermore, I cannot study martyrs and martyrdom objectively because the discourse and its truths influence me and make me subjective.

Boolsen’s description on how to implement a discourse analysis inspired my method. She states that the analysis includes a transcription, a critical reading of the data, and a coding process. With inspiration from Boolsen, transcription of the voice record (used in the focus groups) was done. A small number of parts in the transcription were modified, for example: Multiple “ehs” or “okays” or clear and major linguistic errors have been reworked. Modification has been carried out, because then the reader can easier read and

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57 Bolander, Fejes, pages. 108f
58 Bolander, Fejes, page. 97
59 Jorgensen, Phillips, page. 13
60 Jorgensen, Phillips, page. 19
61 Jorgensen, Phillips, page. 13
62 Bolander, Fejes, page. 111
63 Merete Watt Boolsen, Kvalitativa analyser (2014 Falkenberg) s.174
understand the quotes. Furthermore, a critical readthrough and coding was done by reading through the transcription and writing down central themes. After that notes and a mind map were written down to understand the data and draw conclusions (discursive questions where kept in my head during the coding and critical readthrough). Then another reading of the transcription and listening to the voice record was done to test the conclusions and to find more conclusions. Later, new conclusions and notes were written down. Lastly, quotes were put in the analysis and a discursive reflection was done upon the statements. Chosen quotes were based on the conclusions/notes/themes that were drawn in the coding and critical readthrough.

In the discursive reflection that was fulfilled on the chosen statements I have analysed the construction of martyrs and martyrdom. Thus, I have analysed what the meaning of martyrs and martyrdom is to the participants, how the participants speak about the phenomena and how they construct it, what discourses that produce the language (dialogue, statements, sentences, words)/is produced in the language, of the participants, and how the martyrs and martyrdom are positioned in these discourses. The analysis has produced and reproduced the Palestinian nation and its most important discourse (according to the analysis) Palestinian nationalism, and what other discourses a that are in the frames of the Palestinian nationalism, and how martyrs and martyrdom are situated in the discourse/discourses.

**Ethical discussion**

The guidelines of the Swedish humanities and social science’s ethics of researching are followed throughout the study. The participants are protected by the individual protection requirement which grants the participants four ethical safeties. The first safety implies that the participants need the information that is vital for their participation. Secondly, the study cannot include participants without their continually agreement. The third safety implies that the participants and their statements need to be anonymized. Lastly, that the data produced from the participants is only used for research reasons.

Ethical problems that occurred are: Some participants mentioned who participated in the interviews to people that did not take part in the focus groups. Thus, compromising the confidentiality of the participants. Wibeck writes that it is hard to fully anonymize participants in focus groups because multiple people are involved and therefore more actors could share information regarding the participants. A second problem is that the participants cannot easily contact me to remove statements or to end their participation.

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64 Vetenskapsrådet, *Forskningsetiska principer: Inom humanistisk-samhällsvetenskaplig* (2002) [http://www.codex.vr.se/texts/HSFIR.pdf](http://www.codex.vr.se/texts/HSFIR.pdf) (Received: 2017-04-24) pages. 6
65 Vetenskapsrådet, pages. 7
66 Vetenskapsrådet, pages. 9f
67 Vetenskapsrådet, pages. 12
68 Vetenskapsrådet, pages. 14
69 Wibeck, page. 139
Which is required by one of the four requirements above. The reason behind the problem is: Me and the participants live far away from each other. Furthermore, Massad gathered participants orally and I by mistake did not give my contact information on paper during the focus group. Only Massad has contact with me. A third ethical problem is regarding the sensitive subject (martyrs and martyrdom). How can I as a foreigner interview Palestinians that might have a personal connection with martyrs and martyrdom? Will the theme bring traumatic memoires to the participants? Wibeck means that extra precaution needs be taken when the theme is sensitive. The researcher should reflect about how to study a sensitive subject and how to avoid traumatic memories amongst the participants. A method that I used to approach the problem was by talking to Massad (who also claimed that the subject is sensitive) and another Palestinian. Both Massad and the other person read my questions and purpose. Furthermore, I also spoke with a Palestinian in Sweden before traveling to Palestine, we discussed martyrdom and my question guide. In all cases, after the Palestinians expressed their thoughts on the matter, some changes in the study were done. To think only because someone is Palestinian that she/he has an absolute knowledge in deciding if the theme is sensitive, is wrong. However, no better alternatives were found. Massad also helped me to approach the participants during the focus group in an” non-threatening” way. Thus, made the study field open. Other precautions that were taken was: Not forcing participants to talk, state that no answers are right or wrong, and letting the participants speak freely without being forced to more sensitive subjects (in the frames of martyrs and martyrdom).

Analysis

The analysis includes five chapters. The first chapter shows that martyrs and martyrdom are constructed as vast phenomena in the Palestinian nation. In the second chapter, the importance of martyrs and martyrdom are discussed like in the first chapter. However, the focus is on how tributes to martyrs are constructed and what the tributes mean to the Palestinian nation. In the third chapter, the construction of martyrs and martyrdom in an abstract form, is analysed. The abstract approach focuses on the construction of an ideology and moral codes. In the fourth chapter, the production of martyrs and martyrdom in a concrete Palestinian approach are discussed. The theme of the fourth chapter has already been brought up in chapter one and two but not in the same extent as chapter four. Lastly, the construction of martyrs and martyrdom in a concrete non-Palestinian Arabic and Islamic way is analysed in the last chapter. The last chapter focuses on non-territorial communities that are related to Palestine. As implied before, the participants are anonymised, the names that are displayed below are not the real names of the participants.

70 Vetenskapsrådet, pages. 9f
71 Wibeck, page. 140
Martyrs and martyrdom, vast phenomena

In the interviews, the participants usually referred to Palestine when speaking about martyrs and martyrdom. This chapter discusses why the participants mostly connected martyrs and martyrdom to Palestine. I argue that martyrs and martyrdom have a special meaning in Palestine, that the phenomena are vital in Palestine. The reason why the participants mostly spoke about Palestinian examples is because the important role of martyrdom in Palestine. Another theme that the participants connected martyrdom was to “abstract” examples, which is when the participants were speaking about martyrs and martyrdom, and not connecting it to concrete examples such as the situation in Palestine. Lastly, the participants also connected the dialogue of martyrs and martyrdom to non-Palestinian Arabic and Islamic examples, such as Syria. Three examples are shown below when the participants constructed martyrdom abstractly, concretely(Palestine), and concretely (Arabic/Islamic). These three statements alone cannot conclude that the participants mostly spoke about martyrs and martyrdom connected to Palestine, in the focus groups. To grasp such a conclusion one needs read the whole interview. However, this is not possible for the reader of this thesis, it would be too much for the reader and it would make the thesis unattractive. Thus, quotes below serve as examples of what I define as abstract, concrete(Palestine), and concrete (Arabic/Islamic) statements. However, the discussion in this chapter is based on the whole interview, on all quotes.

So, is the definition of martyr someone that has been killed wrongly? Is it that simple? (-Fadi)

The quote comes from a discussion in a focus group where the participants spoke about the definition of martyrs in an abstract way. In Fadi’s statement martyrs are defined abstractly. Fadi’s does not speak about martyrs related directly to Palestine nor to Islam/Arab.

They [Non-Palestinian Arabic media] use the word [Shaheed/martyr], it is for the Syrians. (-Saad)

The quote above is taken from a dialogue in a focus group where participants discussed if dead people in Syria are martyrs or not. Thus, martyrdom is connected to Syria which is a non-Palestinian Arabic/Islamic context.

Yeah, I think it’s the same for me. The way it[Martyrdom] was contextualized, visualised in my mind, was regarding the Palestinian and Israeli conflict. (-Massad)

In the statement above, Massad constructs martyrdom as something related to Palestine. He even says it himself that it is contextualized as something regarding the Palestinian and Israeli conflict. Thus, martyrdom exist in Palestine.

The usual referring to Palestinian examples when discussing martyrdom can be interpreted in two ways. Before presenting the two examples, the reader needs to know that the interview guide did not include any concrete examples/themes. If such examples

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were going to be discussed then the participants had to come up with own ones. Therefore, the common referring to Palestine can be understood either: As something that is not special to the Palestinian context. Or the participants might have taken it for granted that the intent of the interview was to discuss Palestinian examples, and such was the intent but the participants did not know it. The participants perhaps took it for granted because the interviews were done in Palestine, with Palestinians. If the interviews would have been done in another context, then the participants would maybe link martyrs mostly to that specific context. However, if concrete examples would not exist in the context then how would the participants discuss the phenomenon? This question brings up the second definition of why the martyrs and martyrdom are often connected to Palestine. The second explanation is that martyrs and martyrdom are special in the Palestinian context. That the phenomena are important and vastly existing in Palestine. Lastly, both explanations can influence each other, for example: The participants probably took it for granted that the interview were supposed to be about the Palestinian context at the same time as martyrs and martyrdom are special in Palestine in contrary to other contexts.

The explanation that martyrs and martyrdom are special in Palestine, is, as told before, how I understand why the participants often related martyrs and martyrdom to Palestinian examples. This conclusion is not only based on the discussion above (from the interviews), but also on previous studies. Sörlin states that there are diverse factors (ethical and political) that exist in nations and that the inhabitants are influenced by. From the information gained by the interviews, martyrdom is understood as one of these factors, the inhabitants of Palestine are influenced by martyrdom and they link it to their own nation (see chapter four). Furthermore, Pitcher argues that martyrdom is constructed in the occupation of Palestine. Elbedour, Bastein, and Center mean that the identity of most Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza is an occupation identity. Tawil-Souri states that the political context in Palestine affects every aspect of Palestinian life and culture. Thus, if the occupation is everywhere in the Palestinian society and the occupation is the main reason for martyrs, then martyrs and martyrdom grant vast roles in the Palestinian nation. According to Banat and Allen martyrdom operations is a popular method since the first intifada in the nineties, at the same time the support for martyrdom operations in Palestine rose according to Allen. Martyrdom operation are thus not unusual and are in some extent cherished by the nation. Because of the expansion and cherishing of martyrdom operations, the conclusion that martyrdom is a vital phenomenon in Palestine.

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72 Sörlin, pages. 17ff
73 Pitcher, page, 8
74 Elbedour, Bastein, Center, pages. 224ff
75 Tawil-Souri, pages. 470f
76 Banat, page. 18
77 Allen, pages. 36f
78 Allen, pages. 36f
is strengthen. The conclusion that martyrs and martyrdom are vast phenomena in Palestine makes this thesis even more relevant.

**A nation’s rites**

In my observations, I noticed that martyrdom is special/important/vast in Palestine. It seemed like everyone knew someone who had been proclaimed as a martyr, and that everyone had at least one martyr amongst their friends or/and family. Furthermore, there is a huge amount of graffiti paintings of martyrs and other symbolic paintings that honour and mourn martyrs. There are also other symbolic tributes such as statues, signs, flags, memorial days, ceremonies, traditions, and so forth. The constant reminder of martyrdom through dialogues with Palestinians and the tributes show that martyrdom is a massive phenomenon in Palestine. I argue that the martyrdom tributes produce resistance in the Palestinian nation, the tributes also remind Palestinians of the occupation. One of the ceremonies that I observed was a funeral for the martyr Basil Al-Araj. When I spoke with people in the West Bank about Basil they portrayed him as a famous figure, a person who peacefully fought for the Palestinian cause. Because of his resistance against Israel, he was proclaimed as a martyr. At the funeral, where the body of Basil was carried from the beginning of his village to the cemetery, in a march that looked like a demonstration. Basil’s funeral was discussed in one of the focus groups.

> He [a Palestinian] was killed, also eh, I don’t know eh, motivated! And this motivation came from Basil’s dead. Because these clashes [Palestinians versus Israel military] happened after Basil’s funeral. (-Massad)

Massad states that the funeral motivated a Palestinian to partake in fights against Israel, which resulted in his death. The funeral of a martyr motivates Palestinians to fight against Israel. The martyrdom funeral is a rite that exist in the Palestinian nation. According to Sörlin, rites can be used in a nation to bind the people through a cultural community. The funeral of a martyr constructs a politically influenced cultural community in the Palestinian nation. The martyrdom rite/funeral motivated the Palestinian to fight against Israel. Tawil-Souri agrees with the idea that the culture in Palestine is bound to the political situation. In the quote below the meaning of diverse memorials, tributes, and ceremonies are explained more.

> It [Martyr tributes] keeps that sense of that there is somebody who was fighting because of your cause, and you have to fight to achieve what he did. (-Gabir)

Tributes produce motivation for Palestinians to resist against the occupation. The tribute reminds Palestinians of martyrs that fought for “your” cause, the collective Palestinian cause. The reminding motivates people to keep on fighting for the Palestinian cause, it makes persons want to fight as the martyr and “achieve what he did”. In Massad’s

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79 Sörlin, pages. 79f
80 Tawil-Souri, pages. 470f
statement about the Palestinian who died in clashes motivated by Basil’s funeral, the choice to fight, can from Gabir’s statement be understood as that he wanted to achieve what Basil did. To “achieve what he did” can be interpreted a sentence that highlights the martyr’s struggle and fight against Israel, or to become a martyr, to die and achieve the “rank” of a martyr.

And sometimes it[tributes] makes us survive, like we want to survive, we don’t want to die. Some people believe that when there is a martyr, when there is someone who is killed for us, we have to live for that, we have to get educated, we have to translate this death into words. To spread the word, you know. So, it keeps us yeah... (-Massad)

In the statement above, the reflection that tributes construct a motive to resist is reproduced. In Gabir’s statement, he says that “Palestinians have to achieve what the martyr did”. The meaning is explained as something that can be interpreted in two ways. After Massad’s quote above, the reflection that to resist means that Palestinians want to achieve the martyr “rank” (to die), seems unlikely. Because Massad states that Palestinians do not want to die, they want to live. Furthermore, Massad says that martyrdom “sometimes” makes Palestinians survive. Martyrdom does not make Palestinians want to die/commit suicide attacks, but to survive where they might die. Martyrdom can be understood as a factor that constructs willingness in the Palestinian nation to live and to as Massad states “get educated”, thus to advance their own nation. However, this should not be understood as that martyrdom does not produce resistance, to live and to get educated is a form of resistance according to the quote above. Also, tributes remind Palestinians to share the meaning of martyrdom and to remind other about the resistance. The two statements above reconstruct the idea that cultural rites are politically constructed in Palestine, because of the meaning of the martyr’s funeral.

**An ideology and ethics**

This chapter discusses the meaning of martyrs and martyrdom in an abstract approach. The chapter focuses on the construction of an ideology and ethical considerations. As will be shown in this chapter and the next chapter, the ideology is produced as the Palestinian nation. Furthermore, it analyses in what way and how the phenomena are constructed from the participant’s statements. The produced meaning is also problematised in this chapter.

Okay, I think that a martyr is a person who died, who was fighting for a certain cause, and died representing that cause, from the advisory polar of that cause. For example, if a person is fighting for the colour red and gets killed by the colour blue while he is protecting the colour red then he is a martyr. That’s my description. (-Hassan)

Martyrdom is constructed in the quote above as a phenomenon that becomes alive in a conflict, in a struggle between two bipolar sides. Martyrs represents the dead in a conflict.
However, the martyr is not any dead person in the conflict, but someone who fought for one side and got killed by the opposite part because of the person’s belonging to the part that the person was fighting for. There is not much that demonstrates that if a person from colour blue, the one who killed the martyr, could not become a martyr if the person died. Instead, in the statement above, martyrdom is produced as something that exist in both sides of the conflict. Furthermore, Hassan says that a martyr is someone who died for a “certain” cause and someone who is “protecting”. The word “certain” implies that: firstly, the martyr does not exist in all conflicts. Instead, only in “certain” conflicts. Secondly, that the phenomenon does exist in all conflict but not in both sides. Lastly, a combination between the first and second understanding. The word “protecting” implies that the martyr is defending something. It could be argued that the martyr is being attacked and is innocent and defending her/himself. Secondly, it could also be argued the martyr is the one who attacked and consequently needs to defend her/himself. Nonetheless, the martyr is bound to her/his side, the martyr is protecting the group that the martyr is a part of.

At the same time as martyrs and martyrdom are constructed in a conflict, martyr and martyrdom produces two sides. The two sides are the opposite of each other in a conflict. Rieffer states that religious nationalism exists in places where two bipolar groups fight each other.\textsuperscript{81} The martyr fights for her/his side against the bipolar pole which is the opposite of what the martyr is. Hassan’s choice of using the words “bipolar-poles” construct a “good” and a “bad” side yet at the same time it does not. For the colour blue the red side is “bad” and for the colour red the blues are the ones who are “bad”. Thus “good” and “bad” is produced, yet, the “good” and “bad” is not bound to a certain colour and therefore there are no absolute “good” and “bad”.

The next statement is like the first quote, yet it does bring more information to the attempt of understanding martyrs and martyrdom.

> For me, a martyr is anyone who is killed for an idea. He was fighting to get his own rights and that’s it, anyone who is killed for an ideology or/and idea. (-Riad)

Like Hassan’s statement, Riad speaks about martyrdom as something which exist in a conflict. The martyr is a person who died while fighting for an idea, a cause, and/or a side. However, in Riad’s statement nothing implies that the “idea” or “conflict” which constructs martyrdom can be limited to, as Hassan said “certain” (not all) ideas or conflicts. Riad states that the martyr is anyone who fought for her/his idea/group. Thus, as is argued above, the “good” and “bad” is not bound to a certain idea nor group. The “good” and “bad” is produced from the perspective of the group. The colour interprets their own side as the group that is “good” and that is permeated by martyrdom. Furthermore, Riad states that the martyr fights for his “rights”. The reason why the martyr fights is because the martyr’s rights are under threat. During a conflict, martyrdom exist within the side that is “right”

\textsuperscript{81} Rieffer, page. 234
which can be connected to the “good” side as mentioned above. However, “rights” (“good”) is not constrained to a certain unit, the martyr is as Riad says “anyone”. The discourse produces an idea that “rights” exist in every group. Moore argues that nations are influenced by collective “objective” goods.\(^82\) The “goods” and “rights” produced in the statement above are collective “objective” goods. The goods are objective because the ideology itself constructs them as “true” (good, right, and so forth). However, the goods are not objective because from another ideology’s point of view they might be wrong and not right. Furthermore, Al fatiha, the first sura of the Quran, implies that god will lead the people to the right path.\(^83\) Thus, martyrdom that has roots in Islam can be interpreted as being the right path. The production of Muslim ethics in Palestine is an example of how moral codes of Islam influences Palestine. The Palestinian nationalism, as said in the theoretical framework, is a religious nationalism.

To the contrary of what Hassan says, Raid means that the martyr supports “his rights”. This far, martyrdom has been constructed as something that exist in the group. However, it can also occur on an individual level. The martyr does not have to fight for a “group’s” rights but for the person’s rights. Lastly, the statement above can also be interpreted such as that the person’s rights are a part of the group’s rights. In the next statements, a discussion between Riad and Massad is occurring.

Okay, let’s say if I planted a flower here. And for me it represents something, it’s an idea, I love it, I like it. And I stayed here and protected it from anything and you came and just *smash* [Hits the floor/ grass with his hand]. And I killed you for this? (-Massad)

I am doing something bad. (-Riad)

So, are you a martyr or not? (-Massad)

No. (-Riad)

So, I think our idea is when you fight for you ideology and there is someone, someone who wants to violate it, then he is not a martyr if I killed him. Okay, you are defending an idea. And this idea is embodied in anything around it, in the street for example. And I come and I just want to cut it out for example, take it out. And you killed me. Am I a martyr or not? (-Massad)

No because you want to take, eh, doing eh violations. (-Riad)

The martyr is not someone who does a “bad” act. People who violate something that someone likes without any reason cannot be martyrs. From the discussion so far, of the statements, I conclude that martyrs are produced as “morally innocent”. Innocence in this context is not defined by who kills who, rather who violates another person’s rights and/or ideology. Innocence is constructed by that the martyr’s ideology has been exploited which

\(^{82}\) Moore, page. 38
\(^{83}\) The Quran, page. 1
makes the martyrs ideology, the “good”, able to fight the “bad”. The acts that are done by the “good” are “innocent”. Massad has the right to kill Hassan because he violated Massad’s ideology. Thus, Hassan is not innocent and therefore Hassan is not a martyr. From my observations, I also conclude that the Palestinian nation (the martyr’s ideology, see further down) is constructed as innocent, the innocence is a collective “objective” moral factor. I recall a dialogue with a Palestinian, he told me how in a demonstration some Palestinian had managed to throw a molotov cocktail (fire bomb) on an Israeli soldier, he later expressed that we are not supposed to feel sorry for the soldier, because of the occupation. The example is one of many on how Palestinians interpret their struggle as innocent. The Palestinian actions are ethically fair and right, they do not do anything morally wrong when they defend their nation/ideology.

In the quote above a martyr is as in Hassan’s statement, constructed as someone who defends, and protects, the martyr’s rights/ideology. The rights/ideas are produced as something that stands higher and is more valuable than death or life, war or peace. Through an ideology, a person or a group can kill and make war. However, the group or person needs to be entitled to the ideology, the subject must have a “absolute” right to the ideology. Furthermore, the group/individual that has the rights to an ideology are “good” if they act within the frames of the ideology. An ideology can for example be a nation. Sörlin states that in the nation there are diverse political factors, one of the factors are rights. The inhabitants of a nation have certain rights that the nation provides to the person. The inhabitants are “good” if they act in the frames of the nation’s rights.

What is an idea and an ideology? From the statements, an ideology is produced as a thought about something that the martyr believes in, something that the martyr cherishes. The ideology can be understood as nationalism, a martyr’s ideology is the ideology of the nation. Sörlin writes that nationalists mean that nationalism is the ideology of the nation and that the people of the nation have a full right to decide in the nation. The nationalists have an “absolute” right to the ideology. A Palestinian martyr’s ideology is Palestinian nationalism, the ideology of the Palestinian nation. Furthermore, Radical nationalism means that the inhabitants of the nation should strive for freedom and independence. Making war and killing for the sake of the ideology can be understood as fighting for freedom and impendence. In the dialogue above “someone” violates the ideology of a person which enables the person to kill the violator. From a radical nationalistic perspective, it can be viewed as that the violator violated the nation’s sovereignty and that the nationalist is entitled to fight for freedom. Thus, innocence means that the nations sovereignty and “rights” are under attack and thus the inhabitants can in the name of “innocence” and nationalism fight the “violators” (see chapter four for more).

84 Sörlin pages. 21f
85 Sörlin page. 38
86 Sörlin, page. 44
87 Sörlin, page. 51
Massad states that the “idea is embodied in anything [...] street.”. The ideology is not only constructed as a theoretical/idealistic idea. The ideology is also practical/materialistic. The idea gives the practical world a meaning, the practical world and the idealistic world are synonymous with each other. Violating, attacking, the street (practical element) equals opposing the ideology. On the contrary, violating an ideology is synonymous to inflicting damage on the practical elements. As shown in chapter 4, a Palestinian (practical factor) does not have to die directly from for example: an Israeli offence, to become a martyr. Since a Palestinian is a part of the ideology that is violated, then the person automatically becomes a martyr when the he or she dies. Because the connection between ideology and materialistic. Another example: If a subject vocally expresses that the ideology does not have a right to for example exist, without physically damaging the infrastructure, then because of the connection between the ideology and practical elements, the infrastructure is still symbolically damaged. According to Sörlin, civic infrastructure is a part of the nation and it also produced the nation. Furthermore, violating an ideology constructs martyrdom and if a person dies, then the person becomes a martyr, thus, it also produces martyrs. An attack on the martyr (who is bound to an ideology) equals an attack on the ideology.

In the dialogue with Massad and Riad, what I mention in the method about how Massad becomes the “intellectual” is exemplified. Firstly, Massad is the one who leads the dialogue by asking questions to Riad. Secondly, Massad ends with saying “our idea” which implies that Massad refers to the group (the focus group which in this context is linked to: Palestine). On the contrary, in the first two quotes in this chapter, when speaking about the meaning of martyrdom, the participants say, “for me” and “I think”, implying that it is their perspective. Massad’s choice of “our” can either be understood: literally, that when the participants say, “for me” and “I think” they refer to their individual perspective and that “our” is the focus group's perspective (Palestinian perspective). The first interpretation is backed up by the words (“our”, “I”, “me”), and when “our” is used there is a dialogue where two persons agree with each other. The second way (which is how I interpret the dialogue) that “our” can be understood by Massad's role as a “half assistant” and a “intellectual”. Massad leads the discussion with questions and “wants” to summarize. Thus, the word “our” does not refer more to the Palestinian group perspective than “I” and “me”.

Who/what can decide that X is an ideology and that X gives the subject certain rights? From the quotes above it seems like the group that is permeated by X, the group that constructs/is constructed by X can decided the that X is an ideology and what rights X has. The group concludes what the group is entitled to, the group decides if the group is connected to martyrdom and if the group’s individuals and dead are martyrs or not.

88 Sörlin, page. 42
Therefore, there are no absolute rules or rights that decide what ideology is “good”, what rights it is entitled to, and what/who a martyr is. The martyr is instead produced and reproduced through different discourses, groups, and perspectives, every group can alone construct martyrs and martyrdom for themselves.

**The Palestinian nation**

The quotes that are presented in this study are taken from dialogues when the participants spoke directly about the Palestine and/or the occupation of Palestine. In this chapter I argue that martyrs and martyrdom are constructed as phenomena which are connected to the Palestinian nation and Palestinian nationalism. The construction and the consequences are discussed below.

I think for the people a martyr is anyone that Israeli occupation killed him. But for me not everyone that Israeli occupation killed him will be a martyr. Because maybe some people hate Palestine and he learning to destroy this land and he or she is with Israeli occupation. But, for example Israeli occupation killed someone that hate Palestine, is this person martyr? that the question? (-Cassam)

In the statement above two opposite ideas about who is a martyr in Palestine are produced. Cassam states that according to “the people”/Palestinian people a martyr is a person who died because of the occupation. If the just mentioned idea is true, then anyone who dies in Palestine is a martyr, because the occupation affects every inch of Palestinian life. Tawil-Souri means that the political situation impacts all of Palestine and Bruce argues that the occupation strongly influences the Palestinian identity.

Because the impact of the occupation in Palestine, anyone that dies in Palestine, is according “to the people” a martyr. However, Cassam means that he does not agree with the idea that anyone is a martyr. People that die in Palestine because of the occupation can still be anti-Palestine. People who are anti-Palestine are not martyrs according to Cassam.

Being against Palestine is similar as being a part of the occupation. The second idea, is that a person who supported Palestine and got killed by the occupation is a martyr. Supporting Palestine, can be connected to the discussion in chapter three. That martyrs are constructed as a part of the “good” ideology and that the ideology produces certain “rights”. From the statement above, it can be concluded that the “ideology” (Palestinian nationalism) also produces “certain” obligations. A person must support Palestine to become a martyr, if a person hates Palestine then the persons is constructed as a part of the occupation and “bad”. Sörlin states that one of the political aspects that constructs a nation is obligations, inhabitants of the nation have certain obligations to the nation.

Supporting Palestine is what Sörlin calls obligations to the nation. The thought that a martyr need to be someone who supports Palestine is reproduced in the next quote:

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89 Tawil-Souri, pages. 140f 
90 Elbedour, Bastein, Center, pages. 224f 
91 Sörlin, pages. 21f
Yeah, I agree. I think that idea eh, you know the idea of a martyr is a religious idea. That is really connected to politics you know. It is both political and religious. And you know, I am actually not so much of a nationalist myself and if I die, if I get killed by an Israeli soldier I cannot be a martyr. Because it outside of the definition. (Fadi)

In the statements above, martyrdom is directly linked to nationalism. A martyr is produced as a nationalist. A person who is not a nationalist and dies is not considered a martyr. Rieffer means that in religious nationalism, people who follow the moral codes of the nationalism are included and persons who do not follow the codes are excluded. From the quote above, Palestinian who are nationalistic are constructed as follower of the moral code and are thus included in the nation, but people who are not nationalistic, are excluded. Being a martyr is equal following the moral codes. Sura CIX, also implies the that the “others”, the ones who do not follow the moral codes, are excluded. Furthermore, Palestinian nationalism is constructed as being influenced by politics and religion. The political situation has already been linked to the occupation in this thesis. Furthermore, I argue that the religion mostly refers to Islam, in the Palestinian nation. Sörlin, argues that Islam is often used by Arabic nationalistic when they fight for freedom. However, Muslims are not the only ones that can be martyrs in Palestine, even if Islam is the main religion that is connected to martyrdom in Palestine.

Yeah but we have to keep the religious[Islamic] point of view in mind. Because the root of the word[martyr] and what it means to us is very religious. However, however, eh I remember like a couple of examples were Palestinian Christians were killed by Israelis. They were fighting in the resistance [...] This guy he was Christian and he was named Shaheed, martyr. Even though he wasn't Muslim. (Hassan)

In Hassan’s statement, martyrs and martyrdom is firstly connected to Islam. Martyrdom is based upon Islam from the start and still has an Islamic meaning in the Palestinian nation. However, the religious meaning does not have to be Islam. Christians that fight for the Palestinian cause can also be martyrs. From the statement conclusions that can be drawn are: Islam is the main religion in Palestine when it comes to constructing the meaning of martyrdom, yet Christianity can also be connected to martyrdom if the Christian is among the resistance. Opposing Israel, the occupation, being a nationalist, is more important than being Muslim or Christian. Banat states that the motives of a martyr are mainly nationalistic and then religious. However, there is not a fully consensus regarding if other religions can be produce martyrdom in the Palestinian nation.

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92 Rieffer, page. 234
93 The Quran, page. 603
94 Sörlin, pages. 51
95 Banat, pages. 25ff
But if you come to our society in Palestine and say to them the martyr is Christian [...] we will say to you that he is not martyr because we believe the martyr should just be Muslim. (-Riad)

To clarify the quote above is not part of the dialogue that Hassan’s statement about Christians and martyrs is part of, yet they discuss the same theme. In the quote above, Hassan’s statement that Christians can be martyrs is denied. Riad means that “our society” that “we”, thus that in the Palestinian nation, a martyr cannot be Christian. A martyr is a Muslim. The discussion about religion and martyrdom can be connected to the discussion in chapter 3 regarding “good” and “bad”, that the martyr’s ideology is “good”. Islam can be understood as a “good” ideology or a part of the “good” ideology, the Palestinian nationalism. Islam influences the “good” ideology (Palestinian nationalism). The conclusion that Islam is “good” has full support from the quotes above. However, this does not mean that Christianity is constructed as “bad”, rather sometimes (when the participants conclude that martyrs can be Christians) it is produced as “good”, and sometimes (when the participants state that martyrs cannot be Christians) it is constructed as “neutral”. In the statements above regarding Christianity, it is shown how the moral codes excludes the “others” (Christians). In the statement below, Gabir further explains the discussion regarding constructing martyrs as someone who fights for Palestine.

Okay. I am going to start as a Palestinian, and I am only going to talk about the Palestinian case and the Palestinian martyr. For me it is very obvious for the whole world that our case is under oppression. When we fight to get our right, our land, that is stolen from us, we are fighting a fair right. We are under oppression [from Israel], we are under a power, a massive power, that is attacking us every day. That is killing our brother, our friends, our women. They came inside our city, they break in every night, they shoot anyone, even the kid who is throwing stones in front of pansartank. This is what a martyr is, a martyr has a lot of meaning inside us. When you fight for your freedom you are a martyr. [...] We are restricted by an enemy, by Israeli enemy, that is every day killing us. Okay, that is what martyr means. (-Gabir)

Gabir reproduces the construction of a martyr as a person who supports and fights for Palestine. Furthermore, Gabir states that it is clear to everyone that the Palestinian nation is under an occupation. That the Palestinian nation belongs to Palestinians, “our land” is “stolen from us”. When Palestinians are resisting the occupation, they are fighting to free their land, the land that belongs to Palestinians. When Gabir expressed the statement above he did it emotionally. The statement brought up “sad” emotions and it seemed as the quote was important. Thus, to fight against the occupation that oppresses Palestinians, to fight for freedom, is an emotional and vital act in the Palestinian nation. An act that constructs martyrs. The statement above is an example where the subject of the focus group got sensitive. Palestinian freedom fighters can be understood as nationalists who want to free their land that belongs to them. Sörlin states that radical nationalists have throughout time fought for freedom and independence of their nation, a nation that
belongs to them.\textsuperscript{96} To fight for freedom is also common in religious nationalism according to Rieffer.\textsuperscript{97} The discussing regarding that the martyr can only be a person who supports Palestine is discussed in the dialogue below.

[...] Like he [Fadi] said he is not so nationalist and therefore he will not consider himself as a martyr. But he is still living here and he cross checkpoint and he is under this, eh, oppression that all Palestinians are living under. So, would this like determine that you consider yourself as a martyr because you are suffering?\textsuperscript{(-Massad)}

Exactly, I share the same struggle. \textsuperscript{(-Fadi)}

Ah. \textsuperscript{(-Yousef)}

Because, kind of resistance. \textsuperscript{(-Saad)}

In the statements above, Massad brings back the dialogue to Fadi’s statement (that came before this dialogue in both the interview and in this thesis) regarding that Fadi is not a nationalist and therefore he cannot be a martyr. In contrary to the conclusion that was reached in the other dialogue, that martyrs need to be nationalists, in the statements above martyrs are constructed as people who are and are not nationalists. Massad means that the consequences of the occupation, the “oppression” and “suffering”, can construct martyrs. If a person who lives under the occupation dies, then that person is a martyr. The martyr does not have to be a person who supported Palestine, the martyr can be a person who “only” lived under the oppression. Furthermore, according to Massad’s statements all Palestinians become martyrs if they die, because all Palestinians live under the oppression. Fadi’s answer on Massad’s statement can be interpreted as that Fadi agrees with Massad’s perspective, or that Fadi agrees that he lives under the oppression yet that he still is no martyr if he died, because he is no nationalist. Yousef and Saad seem to agree with Massad. However, Saad also states “kind of resistance”. Saad’s sentence hints that only by living under the occupation, a person is resisting the occupation. Same thinking is produced in chapter two. In the second chapter martyrdom is constructed as a phenomenon that motivates Palestinians to live and to advance their nation and by doing that the Palestinian resist the occupation. A person who is living in Palestine, and violated by the oppression, is thus also resisting the occupation. Furthermore, resisting the occupation can be understood as supporting the Palestinian nation and therefore only by living in Palestine and being influenced by the occupation a person is supporting Palestine. Thus, by living in Palestine a person can become a martyr.

[...] I don’t know why, he just like, he happened to move and the shot got in the kid behind him. It got into his arm and then into his heart, and it’s a very normal story to get shot my mistake. Like he [the kid] didn’t do anything, he did not throw one stone. And he was glorified in the camp, like he always was on the

\textsuperscript{96} Sörlin, pages. 44
\textsuperscript{97} Rieffer, pages. 226
The participants agreed on that society made the kid from the statement above a martyr. The kid who was no resistance fighter, only a person living in Palestine is an example how just living in Palestine can construct a person into a martyr. In the statement, however, Hassan does not agree with “they” (Palestinian society). Hassan states that they produced the kid as a hero instead of a victim. Hassan does not state that he disagrees with societies construction of making the kid a martyr, but a hero. However, it could be interpreted that Hassan refers to a martyr when speaking about a hero. Continuously, that Hassan constructs a martyr is a hero of war and not a victim of war. However, from the interviews with the participants, I interpret martyrs as both victims and heroes. Therefore, it does not have to mean that Hassan disagrees with making the kid a martyr. In any case, Hassan does not agree with societies act of making the boy a hero. Because, it produces a deceptive perspective that constructs Palestinian society as “strong and heroic fighters.” The problem with the just mentioned perspective is that it removes the importance of highlighting the brutality and oppression of the occupation. Instead, by making the kid a hero, the weight is on how Palestinians can withstand anything and that the kid was a great fighter. Lastly, in the statement above, the inequality of the two sides regarding “battle power” is produced, tanks versus tissues. The inequality is also constructed in Gabi’s statement (the fifth quote in this chapter) when Gabi mentions that kids fight tanks with stones. The power inequality that is constructed is one aspect that produces why Palestinians are under oppression and why Palestinians are constructed as innocent. The consequence of the power inequality was noticed in my observations. It was common for Palestinians to mention the inequality and to state that it constructs the Israeli offence as unfair and the Palestinian resistance as fair and good. Like mentioned before, the innocence produces martyrs.

**Territory versus community**

This chapter, Arabic nationalism, analyses how the participants construct martyrs and martyrdom in non-Palestinian Arab contexts. In the chapter “The Palestinian nation”, the participants construct the ideology of martyrdom as Palestinian nationalism. Thus, to become a martyr a person must act and die in the frames of the Palestinian nation. What happens when parts of the frame of the Palestinian nation exist in other contexts? Will it construct martyrs and martyrdom within that context? For example: if a non-Palestinian Arab who is linked to Palestine by being Arab, fights an ideology that has no connection to
the Palestinian nation. Does the Arab, who is linked to the Palestinian nation by being Arab, become a martyr if the Arab is killed in the name of the ideology that is not connected to Palestine?

The idea of martyr is not just related to Palestine. (-Bassam)

Knowledge that martyrdom is not only related to Palestine exists among the participants.

And we can take for example Syria. A lot of people killed but no one here in Palestine or another country can say who of them is a martyr. Because we cannot know what faith they have and all of them is Arab. We cannot know who is killed and who killed another, we cannot know anything so we cannot know who is martyr. (-Riad)

In the statement above, two criteria that construct martyrs are produced. The two criteria are produced by Riad when he states that Palestinians cannot know if a person is a martyr or not, due to lack of information regarding the person. The first criterion is that; Palestinians don’t know the faith/religion of the people/groups fighting. Thus, faith/religion can decide if a person is a martyr. Secondly that all-in Syria are Arabs, thus being or not being Arab can decide if a person is a martyr. Martyrs are the ones who fight for the “good” side and against the “bad” side (see third chapter). Therefore, if the only knowledge that exist about a conflict is that they are Arabs then the only knowledge is that both sides are “good” from a Palestinian perspective. Martyrdom can then not be constructed, because there is no “good” fighting the “bad in the conflict. Being Arab is from a Palestinian perspective constructed as “good”. Palestine is an Arabic state, and Palestinians are connected to Arab. Sörlin states that there are ethnic factors that construct and bind a nation.98 In the Palestinian nation, being Arab is one of the ethic factors. I argue that, when the same ethic factor (Arab) is seen in other nations, such as Syria, then a friendly connection is made between for example: Palestine and Syria. Moore writes that there are non-national communities in the national community (the nation), for example ethnic communities.99 The Arabic community is an ethnic community in Palestine. The Arabic community is not only bound to Palestine, as shown in the quote above, it also exists in Syria. The Arab ethnic community constructs a connection between Syria and Palestine. Furthermore, Hassassan means that the Palestinian nationalism has been influenced by the pan-Arabism (Arabic nationalism) movement during the nineteen centuries. Even thought that there has been a split between Palestinian nationalism and pan-Arabism a connection still exists.100

The two criteria do not mean that they are the only factors that produce martyrdom. Nonetheless they are constructed as one of maybe many criteria that exist regarding martyrdom. Furthermore, the blindness regarding the criteria does not mean that martyrs

98 Sörlin, pages. 21f
99 Moore, pages. 5ff
100 Hassiassan

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do not exist in Syria at all. Riad states that Palestinians cannot know who in Syria is a martyr if martyrs exist. For example, Riad constructs that either A or B is a martyr yet he does not know who. The complication regarding Arab versus Arab and martyrdom also exists in a Muslim versus Muslim conflict, which can be seen in the dialogue below. The discussion is also in the context of conflicts in Syria.

[...] the killer say after killing the victim “allāhu ʾakbar” [Islamic expression] and the killed say “ašhaduʾan lā ilāha illā-llāh, waʾašhaduʾanna muḥammadan rasūlū-llāh” [Islam's Creed]. Who's the martyr here? (-Bassam)

Yeah, the one who is killing is saying “allāhu ʾakbar” and the one who is killed says eh,” ašhaduʾan” ... (-Massad)

The profession [Islam's Creed], it is like the... (-Hassan)

So, who is the martyr? That's why it is complicated. (-Massad)

The exchange between Massad, Hassan, and Bassam is a part of a dialogue about martyrs in Syria and how to decide who is a martyr. The quote shows how religious language is used in the focus group and in Syria. Rieffer states that the usage of religious language is one example on how religion influences a nation and nationalism.101 Andersson means that the language is vital for the construction of a community.102 Like being Arab, being Muslims is a part of the Palestinian nation, Islam is a religious community and an ethnic factor that exist in both Syria and Palestine. Islam is a part of the Palestinian and Arabic nationalism. According to Sörlin, Islam is often used in Arabic nationalistic struggles.103 Thus, as in a conflict between Arabs, a conflict among Muslims cause confusion regarding who is “good” and who is a martyr. Because both are Muslim and both are “good” then who is a martyr becomes unknown. In the next quote the participants once again speak about a conflict between Arabs:

I want to comment on Massad when he said that Arab guy fighting another Arab guy, we cannot consider them [as martyrs] ... (-Bassam)

Muslims. (-Kifat)

Okay, Muslim guys, that we cannot consider them as a martyr. Okay, but if we want to look at war between Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Okay, so we believe that Yemen has right and Saudi Arabia controlled by USA. So, for me I consider the many people who are living in Yemen as a martyr. (-Bassam)

Because they are under oppression. (-Gabir)

Yeah of course and also because both of them are Muslims. (-Bassam)

There are similarities in the discussion above and in Riad’s statement where problems regarding martyrs in a non-Palestinian, Arab versus Arab conflict are produced. However,

101 Rieffer, pages. 224f
102 Andersson, page. 55
103 Sörlin, pages. 51
new perspectives are also constructed in the dialogue between Bassam, Gabir, and Kifat. In the discussion, Arabs and Muslims are produced as the same. Bassam states, unlike Riad, that deciding, of who is a martyr in an Arab/Muslim versus Arab/Muslim conflict where no information regarding who killed who exists, is possible. In the Arab conflict between Yemen and Saudi Arabia, the inhabitants of Yemen are martyrs. The reason why the people of Yemen are martyrs is because Saudi Arabia collaborates with USA. Vanessa B. Teixeira, C. Dominik Guss, and Ma. Teresa Tuason mean that the United States is a part of the occupation of Palestine, because of their alliance with Israel. The partnership with Israel makes the United States an enemy of Palestine. The alliance between Saudi Arabia and the United States constructs Saudi Arabia as the “bad” side and Yemen’s as the “good” side. Yemen is under oppression as Palestine. Because Yemen is according to a Palestinian perspective produced as under occupation (Yemen’s ideology/nation is exploited) and as “good”. Because of that Yemen is constructed as “innocent”, the people of Yemen are produced as martyrs. When a conflict that includes an Arab and a non-Arab then determining who is a martyr is not as complicated as in rivalry between Arabs:

[...] So if none Arab people killed an Arab people. The Arab people would consider him as a martyr. If the opposite happened, our people would not consider him a martyr. (-Massad)

I don’t understand the example. (-Hassan)

So, if I’m Spanish [Non-Arab] and you are Egyptian[Arab] and I killed you. (-Massad)

I’m a martyr. (-Hassan)

Yeah, from and Arab’s point of view. If you killed, me from an Arab’s point of view, you are not a martyr. (-Massad)

In the quote above, the participants speak about a conflict regarding an Arab versus a non-Arab. Palestinians as shown before are linked to Arab identity. The connection is also constructed in the statements above when Massad says that “the Arab people” and “our people” would not consider a non-Arab as a martyr. Furthermore, in the conflict between the Egyptian and the Spanish, all information regarding determining who is a martyr, is based on being Arab or not. Because Arab is being “good”, the Egyptian who is an Arab is constructed as a martyr. Thus, from a Palestinian/Arab perspective, the Arab is a martyr while the non-Arab is not a martyr. Knowledge that the factor “Arab” concludes who is a martyr exist among the participants who are speaking in the dialogue above. Nonetheless, the knowledge about the consequence of Arab affiliation does not change the fallout of the Arab connection (the construction of “good” and martyrdom).

Discussion

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104 Teixeira, Guss, Tuason, page, 420
Martyrs and martyrdom are complex phenomena because there is no absolute international rule that implies to every ideology, nation, and/or conflict. Instead, in diverse ideologies, conflicts, and martyrs and martyrdom are produced in different ways. How and why martyrs and martyrdom are produced depends on what discourse it is that produces the phenomena. Therefore, the definition of martyrs and martyrdom is alternating. It is the discourse that exist in the ideology that constructs martyrs and martyrdom. The discourse of the ideology fills martyrs and martyrdom with meaning and as just said, the meaning is changing depending on what discourse it is that constructs martyrs and martyrdom. For example, according to one discourse some persons might be martyrs but according to another, same persons might not be martyrs. The production of martyrs and martyrdom in my analysis is based on interviews with Palestinians. The meaning of martyrs and martyrdom is in this case constructed by a Palestinian nationalism discourse. The reason why the participants constructed martyrs and martyrdom in the way they did is because of the Palestinian nationalism discourse. The discourse both constructs and is produced by the cultural and Political situation in Palestine, by the occupation, Islam, and by Arabic factors.

The Palestinian nationalistic discourse is constructed from the participant’s language. The Palestinian nationalistic discourse constructed martyrs and martyrdom as a positive and innocent phenomenon. The ethical innocence and positives is vital in the construction of martyrs. Martyrs and martyrdom exist in a conflict where an ideology, group, nation etcetera, has violated the rights of another ideology and so forth, which also makes the ideology innocent. The ideology is not just bound to the idea/unmaterialistic world, but it also permeates the practical/materialistic world. Martyrs are people who protect and seek to retake their rights of their ideology from the oppressor. A rule for martyrs are that they cannot act outside the frames of what the ideology grants the martyrs. When a person who defended the ideology dies, then she/he becomes a martyr. Martyrs are therefore constructed as good because the martyrs protect their ideology and act in ways that they are entitled to. The oppressor however, oversteps the rights and is therefore bad. Martyrdom does not exist in a conflict that is between two good ideologies. Furthermore, it is the ideology itself that decides what rights it has.

In the Palestinian case, martyrs are constructed in the frames of the Palestinian nation. In contrast to other nations/ideologies, martyrdom has an important role in the Palestinian nation. The martyrs’ ideology is the Palestine nationalism, thus the ideology of the Palestinian nation. The Palestinian nation and nationalism is influenced by Arab, Islam, and the Israeli occupation. The occupation is vital in the Palestinian nationalism, it constructs Palestine as innocent and good, which Arab and Islam do to, but not in the same extent. Martyrs are constructed from the three influences. By being Arab, Muslim, and/or by resisting the occupation, persons can be constructed as martyrs. The three factors also work on an international/non-territorial level. From a Palestinian nationalism discourse, persons who are Arab and/or Muslim, who are included in the Arab/Islam
community, and who live/fight in another nation, can be produced as martyrs. The factor “occupation” works the same as Arab and Muslim. The Palestinian nation and its rights are violated by an Israeli occupation. Martyrs are people who support the Palestinian nation and its rights. Martyrs support the Palestinian nation and its rights by being a part of the nation, by advancing the nation, and/or by influencing damage on Israel or other nations/groups that are a part of the Israeli occupation. If a person is for example Christian (not Muslim) she or he can become a martyr if he or she supports Palestine regarding the occupation of Palestine. The support of Palestine can also exclude Palestinians of being martyrs, if Palestinians don’t support or are oppressed by the occupation, they cannot be constructed as martyrs. The Palestinian martyr and the nation is constructed as good and as innocent. Martyrdom produces innocence to the Palestinian nation and it binds (for example by tributes but also by the whole phenomena itself) the Palestinian nation into an, mostly Islamic, ethically/morally innocent and good collective.

None factor alone, as Lori Allen states, constructs martyrs and martyrdom. Instead, I argue that the occupation, Islam, nationalism, ethics, and so forth influences each other and the martyrs and martyrdom phenomena. However, all mentioned aspects are in the frames of the Palestinian nation and nationalism. It is not a nationalistic religion that exist, but a religious nationalism. In this thesis, the vitality and size of martyrs and martyrdom, rites/tributes, an ideology and ethical considerations, the Palestinian nation and nationalism, non-Palestinian and non-territorial Arabic and Islamic communities, have been discussed. One could argue that discourses regarding ethical consideration and rites in the nations have been constructed, which is true. However, three main discourses regarding martyrs and martyrdom have been produced in this thesis: Palestinian nationalism, Islam, and Arab. All three discourses influence and construct each other. Yet, the Palestinian nationalism is the main discourses regarding the production of the Palestinian nation and martyrs/martyrdom. Islam and Arab influences the Palestinian nationalism yet they do not lead the Palestinian nationalistic discourse, instead, Islam and Arab are being lead and produced by the Palestinian nationalism.

A theme that needs further study is: The role of media in constructing martyrs and martyrdom. According to the interviews, media and social media spread the word about martyrs, who martyrs are and why. However, the participants mean that media/social media both overuses the word and sometimes states that X is a martyr when according to the participants X is no martyr.

Allen, pages. 34ff
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