

Martyrs – Innocence, Vengeance and Despair in the Middle East
by Joyce M. Davis. Palgrave Macmillan 2003.

This is an excellent analysis of the phenomenon of martyrdom in its most modern Islamic incarnation, as a weapon of war against perceived enemies, but specifically Americans, Israelis, Jews and Western interests.

Joyce Davis considers martyrdom in the context of innocent victims of the Israel-Palestine conflict, children and women as suicide bombers and soldier-martyrs, the suicide bomber and the pilot of one of the 9/11 aircraft, the mothers of martyrs and those who train martyrs. The last two chapters consider whether this scourge can be stopped and the depths of the hatred against which any hope must be measured.

This is a chilling book that is both deeply depressing and disturbing; the implacability of the hatred is the stuff of nightmares and the future that current actions in the Middle East may be storing up for us is terrible. Having said all that, anyone who wishes to be informed about the multi-dimensional conflict in the Middle East, and the ramifications of the global war against terror should read this book.

My sole caveat is that Martyrs is by far the worst example of non-editing that I have come across. Almost every page is riddled with the most obvious typographical errors, and grammatical bloopers and misspellings abound as well. An otherwise sound work is grievously marred by these wholly avoidable mistakes.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh