



Mother From Hell

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The horrifying ingredients of the life of Mariam Farhat, or Umm Nidal (mother of Nidal), one of the newly elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, provide a terrifying glimpse into the future of the Palestinian Authority under the rule of the new Hamas government.

To be sure, no one more fully embodies the Hamas ethos -- and the ethos of infanticide that permeates contemporary Palestinian culture as a whole -- than Mariam Farhat, a mother who wills the death of her own children and the children of others. The New York Times recently identified her as "the mother of three Hamas supporters killed by Israelis." The Times added that "she bade one son goodbye in a homemade videotape before he stormed an Israeli settlement, killing five people, then being shot dead. She said later, in a much-publicized quotation, that she wished she had 100 sons to sacrifice that way. Known as the 'mother of martyrs,' she was

seen in a campaign video toting a gun."

Umm Nidal's oldest son Nidal was killed in 2003, and his brother Rawad in 2005 -- both as they were involved in actions against Israelis. Muhammad Farhat was the first of her sons to die. In June 2002 he stormed the Atzmona settlement in Israel, firing indiscriminately, killing five teenagers and wounding twenty others before he himself was killed. When asked by an interviewer if her son had intended to target civilians, Umm Nidal responded: "Muhammad carried out his operation at a military academy. They were all soldiers."

If Muhammad had targeted women and children, of course, that would have been just fine with his mother as well. The deaths not only of her own children, but of others, do not disturb her. "These are war necessities," she explained. Killing civilians, she said,

“is a war necessity. They are all occupiers to begin with. Whoever comes from abroad and lives on the land of Palestine is considered an occupier, even if they are women or old people. They are all occupiers....Therefore, all Israelis are considered occupiers of our land. There is no difference between men and women...This is Islamic religious law. I don't invent anything. I follow Islamic religious law in this. A Muslim is very careful not to kill an innocent person, because he knows he would be destined to eternal Hell....We rely on Islamic religious law when we say there is no prohibition on killing these people.”

Umm Nidal believes all this so deeply that she cried out “Allahu Akbar” when she learned of Muhammad's murders and his own death; she “prepared boxes of halva and chocolates, and handed them out to his friends.” To those who would reproach her for being heartless, she responded:

“We cannot stop sacrificing just because we feel pain. What is the meaning of sacrifice? One sacrifices what is precious, not what is of little value. My children are the most precious thing in my life. That is why I sacrificed them for a greater cause – for Allah, who is more precious than them. My son is not more precious than his God, he is not more precious than the places holy to Islam, and he is not more precious than his homeland or his Islam. Not at all.”

In fact, Mariam Farhat encouraged her other sons to follow in Muhammad's footsteps and become Islamic martyrs themselves by killing Israelis and getting killed in the process: “After the martyrdom [operation], my heart was peaceful about Muhammad. I encouraged all my sons to die a martyr's death, and I wish this even for myself. After all this, I prepared myself to receive the body of my son, the pure shahid, in order to look upon him one last time and accept the well-wishers who [came] to us in large numbers and participated in our joy over Muhammad's martyrdom.” Nidal and Rawad emulated Muhammad; it should not surprise anyone if her remaining three sons become murderers also. And if they do, Umm Nidal will praise Allah for their deaths, as she does for the deaths of her three “martyrs.”

It remains intriguing in the context of this death culture that many observers still cling to hope that Hamas, which put this woman forward as a candidate, will somehow change and will become a moderate force. After the elections, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said: “Palestinian people have apparently voted for change, but we believe their aspirations for peace and a peaceful life remain unchanged.” Mariam Farhat, however, was not only nominated, but was elected to the Palestinian Legislative Council, and was mobbed last week by thrilled supporters at a Hamas victory rally. One young woman exclaimed: “She is a mother to every house, every person.” Responding to those who would find hope in the fact the Umm Nidal is one of five women who were elected to the Palestinian Legislative Council, Fatah's Naima

Sheikh Ali said of Hamas: "Yes, they respect women, but as they conceive that respect. It is from a religiously fundamental view. For the women's movement, this will set us back several steps."

The question must be asked: do Palestinians, despite having elected Hamas and Umm Nidal, actually reject the perspectives and positions represented by her and her party, as so many Western officials would so dearly love to believe? Umm Nidal herself doesn't think so. "All the Palestinians," she asserted, "share the same view" that she articulated about the legitimacy of targeting Israeli civilians. "They are not divided. The only ones who disagree and think otherwise are, of course, the foreigners, who have no sympathy for us or for our cause, and who know nothing about us. They are the ones who think that this man has come to kill innocent people. This is what they think. But we, as Muslims, think differently. We are familiar with the Koranic verse: 'One who attacks you, attack him in like manner.'"

But don't the Palestinians want peace? Yes, says Umm Nidal, but "the word 'peace' does not mean the kind of peace we are experiencing. This peace is, in fact, surrender and a shameful disgrace. Peace means the liberation of all of Palestine, from the [Jordan] to the [Mediterranean] Sea. When this is accomplished — if they want peace, we will be ready. They may live under the banner of the Islamic state. That is the future of Palestine that we are striving towards." The future of Palestine is the future of Umm Nidal's own family: young men

driven to fanaticism and murder, egged on by their own mothers and the society at large. Nothing would make her happier than the deaths of her other three sons. Yet the world not only does not call this madness; it rushes to show Hamas that its largesse will not be cut off.

Striving toward the same peace envisioned by Umm Nidal is Hamas leader Khaled Mash'al, who said this at the Al-Murabit Mosque in Damascus last Friday: "Before Israel dies, it must be humiliated and degraded. Allah willing, before they die, they will experience humiliation and degradation every day. America will be of no avail to them. Their generals will be of no avail to them. The last of their generals has been forgotten. Allah has made him disappear. He's over. Gone is that Sharon behind whose back they would hide and find shelter, and with whom they would feel relatively secure. Today they have frail leaders, who don't even know where our Lord placed them. Allah willing, we will make them lose their eyesight, we will make them lose their brains."

If world officials think that an electorate that elected Umm Nidal and her party in free and secret balloting is not enthralled with blood, death, and genocidal intransigence, and that it will somehow stop celebrating the deaths of not only Jewish innocents, but of their own children as well, and that it will somehow join the community of free and rational nations, then they have already lost not only their eyesight; they have already lost their brains.