

East or west: Martyrdom

by Eslayed A

Submission date: 03-Jan-2024 01:41PM (UTC+0400)

Submission ID: 2266365925

File name: FINAL_Martyrdom_M_A_001_2024.docx (39.52K)

Word count: 4910

Character count: 28851

East or West: A Fresh Tapping into Martyrdom in the Qur'ān

Abstract

This study tackles the underexplored concept of '*Istishhād*' (martyrdom) in Sunnī Qur'ān interpretations, addressing an existing gap in contemporary Islamic scholarship. It innovatively contrasts classical interpretations from scholars with contemporary views, thereby offering a rich, multifaceted examination of this intricate topic. The methodology adopted includes a thorough content analysis enabling a critical and comparative analysis of these diverse interpretations. This approach illuminates the evolution and variety in Islamic thought regarding '*istishhād*'. A key finding of this research is the uncovering of prevalent misunderstanding(s) and misrepresentation(s) of martyrdom in Western narratives, underscoring the urgency for more accurate and nuanced comprehension in modern religious and geopolitical dialogues. The study advocates for the incorporation of a broader array of Islamic perspectives in future scholarly work, moving beyond mainstream Sunnī interpretations of the Qur'ān to find complementary interpretation in the Prophetic Sunnah. This inclusive approach promises to deepen the understanding of '*istishhād*' and contribute significantly towards a more balanced East/West intellectual encounters on Islamic theology and its contemporary implications.

Keywords: Martyrdom, Qur'ānic Interpretations, '*Istishhād*', Exegesis, Misconceptions, Contemporary Islam.

Background

The concept of martyrdom, '*istishhād*', in the Qur'ānic context has garnered significant attention across the centuries, bridging classical and modern Islamic thought with Western scholarship. Yet, a comprehensive dialogue between these intellectual traditions, especially from a Sunnī exegetical perspective, remains conspicuously underdeveloped. This lacuna often leaves a fragmented understanding of '*istishhād*', obscuring its varied applications in the modern world. The present study aims to bridge this gap in Qur'ānic scholarship by addressing three crucial questions: What is the contribution of Sunnī Qur'ān exegetes in elucidating the concept of martyrdom within its Qur'ānic milieu? How do classical and modern interpretations align with or diverge from this context? And, do these exegetes support or contradict the non-Muslim Western understanding of '*istishhād*' in the Qur'ān?

The *tafsīr* (exegesis) of the Qur'ān serves as a foundational pillar in understanding the evolving notions of '*istishhād*'. The interpretation of Qur'ānic verses related to jihad and martyrdom has undergone significant transformations over time.¹ Our study, therefore, focuses on selected Qur'ānic verses, providing a nuanced understanding of the term '*shahīd*' and its various connotations. This approach is not only essential for shedding light on the Qur'ānic exegetical perspective, but also for enabling non-Arabic-speaking and Western audiences to grasp the linguistic and interpretative depths of '*istishhād*' in the Qur'ān.

¹ Afsaruddin, Asma. "Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought and History." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. Published online March 3, 2016. p. 17.

Our analysis primarily revolves around the interpretations of two classical exegetes: al-Qurṭubī (d. 1272), al-Rāzī (d. 1209), and two modern exegetes: Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), and al-Sha'rāwī (d. 1998). Al-Qurṭubī's works, as detailed by Mashhūr Ḥasan Mahmūd Sulaymān in "Al-Imām, al-Qurṭubī: Shaykh A'immat al-Tafsīr," are particularly insightful, given his context of Andalusian interfaith tensions². Al-Rāzī, known for his analytical and thematic exegesis, provides a multifaceted understanding of Qur'ānic verses, as discussed by 'Abd al-Mun'im Al-Nimr in '*Ilm al-Tafsīr*'.³ The modern perspectives of Riḍā and al-Sha'rāwī, who witnessed the 20th-century sociopolitical upheavals, bring a reformist critique to classical notions of jihad and '*istishhād*', as reflected in Riḍā's *Tafsīr al-Manār* as well as al-Sha'rāwī's *al-Tafsīr*'. In exploring these exegetical perspectives, the study also delves into some modern sources by contemporary scholars. This approach is instrumental in our attempt to present a balanced view of the evolving interpretations of '*istishhād*'.

Interestingly, some remarkable modern works have delved into martyrdom in the Qur'ān. First, Asma Afsaruddin's 'Dying in the Path of God: Reading Martyrdom and Moral Excellence in the Qur'ān'. While her work provides an extensive coverage of martyrdom in the Qur'ān, her analysis is apparently limited to very few and brief selected classical interpreters that do not include Qurṭubī and al-Rāzī as the two classical interpretations consulted in this paper. No reference is made to modern Qur'ān interpreters as well. This maybe justified by the fact that her work attempts to link martyrdom to moral excellence and views the Qur'ānic concept of martyrdom from a pure eschatological and hereafter understanding.⁴

Second, Elsayed Amin's seminal work, 'Terrorism from a Qur'anic Perspective: A Study of Selected Classical and Modern Exegeses and Their Interpretation in the Modern Context,' is widely regarded as an essential text for comprehending '*istishhād*' in the Qur'ān. Amin's dissertation delves deeply into the notion of martyrdom, with a particular emphasis on the ideological nuances between martyrdom and suicide operations in the Israeli-Palestinian context. Notwithstanding its rich analysis, the relevance of some aspects of Amin's work may have diminished due to evolving military strategies and socio-political dynamics in the region. Furthermore, while it was conceived as a Sunni response to global perceptions linking jihad and terrorism, it's worth noting that the work, being over a decade old, might not fully encompass the latest scholarly insights on '*istishhād*', especially those that extend beyond the traditional Arab and Middle Eastern discourse⁵.

Third, David Cook's 'Martyrdom in Islam' extensively dealt with martyrdom from a non-Muslim outsider lens that may have overlooked a balanced reading of Sunnī exegetical literature. In addition, Cook's reading of martyrdom is not thorough, as far as Qur'ān's interpretations are concerned. Regrettably, it is apparently biased viewing its insistence to project the then martyrdom operations in Palestine as a suicide. Beyond the literature review

² Sulaymān, Mashhūr Ḥasan Mahmūd. *Al-Imām, al-Qurṭubī: Shaykh A'immat al-Tafsīr*. Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1993/1413. p. 22f.

³ Al-Nimr, 'Abd al-Mun'im. '*Ilm al-Tafsīr: Kayfa Nasha' wa-Taṭawwara Ḥatta Intaha Illa 'Asrina al-Ḥāḍir*'. Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī, 1985/1405. pp. 99-105, 128.

⁴ Afsaruddin, Asma. "Dying in the Path of God: Reading Martyrdom and Moral Excellence in the Qur'ān." In *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam*, edited by Sebastian Günther and Todd Lawson, Vol. 1, pp. 162-181.

⁵ Amin, El-Sayed Mohamed Abdalla. *Terrorism from a Qur'anic perspective: a study of selected classical and modern exegeses and their interpretation in the modern context*. Diss. University of Birmingham, 2010. p. 218-284..

presented here, this study will attempt to fill an existing gap about *'istishhād'* in the Qur'ān as reflected by the selected Sunnī classical and modern interpretations.⁶

The methodology of content analysis is employed in this study, considering its efficacy in examining historical and contemporary Qur'ānic interpretations. This method is pivotal in understanding the transformation of religious and intellectual discourses over time.⁷

The choice of exegetes for this research was methodically considered. Al-Qurṭubī, who resided during a time characterized by heightened Muslim and non-Muslim discord in Andalusia, endeavored to elucidate comprehensively on *'istishhād'* and the Qur'ān. His exegeses, as presented in the writings of Sulaymān, demonstrate a sophisticated grasp of the proactive stance towards non-Muslims. This underscores the intricate relationship between religious doctrines and the socio-political context within Islamic legal theory.⁸ In contrast, Al-Rāzī is renowned for his comprehensive methodology in *tafsīr*, integrating thematic, linguistic, juristic, and doctrinal interpretations.⁹

Conversely, contemporary exegetes such as Rashīd Riḍā and al-Sha'rāwī experienced eras of substantial socio-political transformation. Afsaruddin's examination of Riḍā's *Tafsīr al-Manār* reveals a reformist perspective challenging traditional notions of warfare and *'istishhād'*, indicative of the 20th-century shifts in Islamic intellectual discourse.¹⁰ The late al-Sha'rāwī, an eminent figure in modern Egypt, offered interpretations significantly influenced by contemporary events, such as the occupation of Palestine and his role in mediating Egypt's internal conflicts. His expositions remain critically relevant in understanding contemporary interpretations and applications of *'istishhād'*, reflecting on how socio-political contexts shape religious discourse and understanding. His legacy endures in the ongoing dialogue around martyrdom and its place within the modern Islamic world.

Furthermore, this study broadens its scope to incorporate secondary materials from a diverse array of contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim academics. This approach guarantees a comprehensive grasp of *'istishhād'*, embracing a spectrum of interpretations and perspectives. The viewpoints of Western scholars like Santoso and Choi are subjected to critical analysis. Santoso's investigation into the reassessment of martyrdom in early Islam offers a viewpoint that diverges from the conventional Islamic interpretation of *'shahīd'*.¹¹ Choi and Acosta, equating *'istishhād'* with terrorism, underscores the controversial aspects of interpreting Qur'ānic verses within the framework of contemporary geopolitical challenges.¹² These varied perspectives emphasize the necessity for a nuanced and balanced examination of *'istishhād'*, considering both the Muslim and non-Muslim viewpoints.

⁶ David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁷ Nelson, Chad. Jr, Robert H. Woods. "Content Analysis." In *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, edited by Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, pp. 109-122.

⁸ Sulaymān, Al-Imām, al-Qurṭubī, 22 f.

⁹ Troudi, Khaled. *Qur'ānic Hermeneutics with Reference to Narratives: A Study in Classical Exegetical Traditions*. PhD dissertation submitted to the University of Exeter, 2011. pp. 80-82.

¹⁰ Afsaruddin, Asma. "*Jihad and Martyrdom*". p. 21.

¹¹ Santoso, Dri "The Dynamics of Muslim Interpretation of Jihad Verses: Between Morality and Military." *Altahrir* 22, no. 1 (2022): 49–70; Choi and Acosta. "Sunni Suicide Attacks and Sectarian Violence." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 7 (2020): 1371–90, p. 1373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1472585>.

¹² Choi and Acosta. "Sunni Suicide Attacks, p. 1374.

In summing up, this research endeavors to bridge a significant schism in contemporary Qur'ānic studies, marked by a pronounced discord between some Western scholarly views and established Islamic interpretations. Through a detailed examination of the expansive notion of '*istishhād*', employing diverse exegetical perspectives, the study seeks to elucidate and situate the term within its proper framework. This effort is geared towards enriching the overall grasp of '*istishhād*'s role and relevance, traversing both its historical roots and its implications in the present-day Islamic discourse.

Meanings and Occurrences of '*istishhād*' in the Qur'ān

The Qur'ān presented diverse occurrences of the word '*istishhād*'. The verb *shahida* generally refers to witnessing or seeing an event. According to al-Qurṭubī, the Qur'ānic chapter 2 verse 185, the 'witnessing' in the verse relates to the month of Ramadan's crescent or *hilāl* as part of a Muslim community collective effort to witness the *hilāl*.¹³ The Arabic verb '*shahida*' and its multiple literal occurrences can be seen in one hundred and fifty eight times in the Qur'ān.¹⁴ This vivid presentation about the word and its derivatives is neither mentioned nor even admitted to have existed in Western literature which, unfortunately, reduces '*istishhād*' and *shahīd* to terrorism.¹⁵ Noticeably, the literal occurrences and their meanings especially for the words *shahida* and *shahīd*, which follow each other in chapter 46 verse 10 in the Qur'ān refer to the person who attests to the divine source of the Qur'ān.¹⁶ Moreover, both *shahida* and *shahīd* occur in chapter 12 verse 26 of the Qur'ān. Moreover, according to in chapter 3 verse 18, *shahida* means knowledge. Allah in chapter 33 verse 55 is a *shahīd* or omniscient.¹⁷

In his interpretation of this verse, *Al-Qurṭubī* maintains that both the word *shāhid* and *mashhūd* can not be linked to a specific meaning where we can assume that this specific meaning should or should not be given priority over other meanings. *Al-Qurṭubī* attributed this to the non-occurrence of a sound Prophetic ḥadīth to specify the meaning(s) or to prioritize one meaning over the other. As a result, multiple meanings can be considered for both words. These meanings can include Allah himself, Muhammad (peace be upon him) as well as the Day of Judgement as a *mashhūd* day.¹⁸

The above interpretations show that the root word *shahīd* and its possible plural *shuhadā* and *shuhūd* or witnesses can be explained in multiple ways, and can, therefore, refer to diverse meanings. For relevancy purposes, the discussion in this study will only highlight the word *shahīd* and its possible plural *shuhadā* as they occur in the Qur'ān. This is because of the apparent

¹³ Al-Qurṭubī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣār. *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*. Vol. 2. Cairo: Dār al-Sha'b, n.d. p. 299.

¹⁴ Badawi, Elsaid M., and Muhammad Abdel Haleem. *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*. Leiden: Brill, 2008. p. 497; Amin, *Terrorism from a Qur'anic Perspective*, p. 76.

¹⁵ Santoso, "The Dynamics of Muslim Interpretation of Jihad Verses," 60.

¹⁶ Badawi and Abdel Haleem, *Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, 498; Shehata, Asmaa. "Martyrdom in Early Islam: The Role of Martyrs' Mothers." *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies* 2, no. 7 (2022): 228–34. <https://doi.org/10.55677/ijssers/V02I07Y2022-01>.

¹⁷ Badawi and Abdel Haleem, *Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*. 498.

¹⁸ Al-Qurṭubī. *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*. Vol. 12. p. 166.

possible link between martyrdom, as an English term, and *shahīd*, as an Arabic and Qur'ānic term, as well be explained.¹⁹

Meanings and Occurrences of *Al-Shāhid* in the Qur'ān

The term *shahīd*, specifically, refers to one who attempts '*istishād/shahādah* for the sake of Allah. The Qur'ānic words '*ustushhida*, '*istashhada*, and '*tashahhada* refer to the Muslim who fights and is killed while fighting in the cause of Allah.²⁰ In English, this is called a 'martyr', and the act itself (i.e. '*istishād*) is called 'martyrdom'.²¹

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that term '*shahīd*', as an Arabic and a Qur'ānic word, and the English word 'martyr' are not exact linguistic equivalents, as sometimes presumed by Western scholars and non-native speakers of Arabic.²² The semantic scope of '*shahīd*' traditionally encompasses dying in battle, which is a more specific context compared to the broader implications of 'martyr', an English term that may refer to dying for both religious and non-religious convictions. This distinction might underpin some of the misunderstandings inherent in the Muslim versus non-Muslim or western perspectives when grappling with the concept of '*istishād*' and its representation in the Qur'ān. Despite these nuances, the English term 'martyr' is arguably the nearest equivalent for '*shahīd*', and similarly, 'martyrdom' serves as the closest translation for '*istishād*'.

As a term, *shahīd* occurs 'no less than fifty-six times'²³ in multiple forms in the Qur'ān that may reveal specific grammatical, morphological, as well as lexical meanings such as the meaning of a "witness" as in chapter 2 verse 282, a person paying attention as in chapter 50 verse 37, a person who is present as in chapter 4 verse 72, and a person watching something as in chapter 5 verse 117, and a person who acts as a judge as in chapter 10 verse 29. None of the above meanings shows a connection, with the exception of the meaning in chapter 2 verse 282, to the word 'martyr'.

Having stated the above, it is evident now that the word *shahīd* is connected to the word 'witness' in English. This becomes vivid when the word 'witness' is used to denote meanings beyond dying on the battlefield. The apparently equivalent English word 'martyr', however, should remain frequently used as an equivalent or a near equivalent to the Arabic word *shahīd*. This should not rule out the possible interpretation that one of the meanings of the Arabic word *shahīd* is 'witness', as stated above, because angles attend the death of the *shahīd* and give him/her glad tidings to his/her place in Paradise.²⁴

¹⁹ 'Aleqāni, Maḥmūd, Murtadha Muahhari, and Ali Shari'ati. *Jihād and Shahādāt: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam*. Edited by Mehdi Abedi and Gary Legenhausen. Houston, Texas: Institute for Research and Islamic Studies, 1986. p. 3.

²⁰ Badawi and Abdel Haleem, *Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, p. 498

²¹ Hornby, A.S. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. Edited by Jonathan Crowther. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. p. 719.

²² Ganor, Boaz. "Targeted Killings: Ethical & Operational Dilemmas." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 33, no. 2 (2021): 353–366. p. 357. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003222873-11>; Slavicek, David Jan. "Deconstructing the Shariatic Justification of Suicide Bombings." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 6 (2008): 553–71. P. 564. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802064833>.

²³ Lawson, B. Todd. "Martyrdom." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, edited by John L. Esposito, Vol. 3, 54. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

²⁴ Al-Miṣbāḥ, 'Adil Jāsim 'Alī. *Al-Shahīd fī al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah: Min Wāqī' al-Kutub al-Sittah*. Kuwait: Maktabat al-'Imām al-ḥabābī li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzhī', 2008/1429. p. 24.

Ironically, Western scholars like Bernard Lewis and others limitedly trace the origin of the English word 'martyr' to the Greek word 'martyr'²⁵ adding to the more confusion experienced by many Western scholars about Qur'anic terms like the *shahīd* and others for the same probable reason mentioned above; the lack of Arabic language proficiency or the in-depth research into the connotational and lexical meanings of Qur'anic terminologies of the word the *shahīd* and other related derivatives. Interestingly, not only Western and non-Arab scholars showed apparent confusion in understanding the multiple lexical and connotational aspects of *'istishhād* in its various derivatives and manifestations, al-Rāzī as a reputable Muslim exegete may have contributed to this (mis)understanding narrative.

In his non-conforming view with the majority of classical and modern exegetes consulted in this study, al-Rāzī showed reservations to consider that the martyr is the one who is killed in the battlefield with non-Muslims. To substantiate his claim, al-Rāzī opines that when a Muslim wishes to die in the battlefield, this wish is fulfilled by a Muslim being killed by disbelievers. This wish, according to him, is unlawful in Islam. Acknowledging the status of al-Rāzī as a *mufassir*, his view here can not be accepted as a mainstream interpretation, as far as battlefield Muslim martyrs are concerned.²⁶

Turning to modern exegetes like Riḍā shows that seeking martyrdom should not necessarily mean that the person wishes to be killed by non-Muslims in the battlefield as claimed by al-Rāzī. The interpretation, which could be deemed correct as viewed by Riḍā here, is that a believer in Allah indulges into the battlefield with the hope of reaching one of the best outcomes: attaining victory in this worldly life or gaining reward in the afterlife; a thing which may warrant a brief discussion of martyrdom in the Qur'an as a highly rewarding act.²⁷

'Istishhād as a Highly Rewarding Act in the Qur'an

While the term 'shahid' is not explicitly equated with 'martyr' in the Qur'an, it indeed addresses various dimensions of martyrdom. A pertinent verse illustrating this concept is:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ هُمْ الْجَنَّةَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ وَعَدَا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ ۚ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۚ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوا بَبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ ۚ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ﴾ (سورة التوبة: 111)

"Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their wealth in exchange for Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. It is a promise binding upon Him in the Torah, the Gospel, and the Qur'an. Who is truer to his covenant than Allah? Rejoice then in your bargain that you have contracted. And that is the great victory." (Surah 9:111)

This verse signifies a divine covenant with believers, who in devotion and struggle for justice and truth, as interpreted by Riḍā in his *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm*, engage in battle for the

²⁵ Lewis, Bernard. *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*. New York: The Modern Library, 2003. p. 38; Amin, *Terrorism from a Qur'anic Perspective*, p. 225.

²⁶ Al-Rāzī. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*. Vol. 10. p. 139.

²⁷ Riḍā, Muḥammad Rashīd. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm: Al-Mushthahir bi 'ism Tafsīr al-Manār*. Vol. 10. 2nd ed. Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1947/1366. p. 558.

cause of Allah, with the ultimate promise of Paradise²⁸. It conveys the concept of martyrdom as a sacred commitment and sacrifice in the path of righteousness and divine truth.

Al-Sha'rāwī stated that the two words of 'purchased' and 'bargain'²⁹ are used figuratively.³⁰ Importantly, this holistic interpretation raised by al-Sha'rāwī solves a central confusion in the understandings of Western scholars like Moghadam³¹ who may unknowingly link the two words in the verse with a transactional relationship; to be killed in the battlefield to become eligible recipient of physical pleasure from Allah in the afterlife. The relationship with Allah, our creator, should not necessarily follow this limited transactional attitude as maintained by Moghadam. Holistic relationship with Allah is what derives the believer to sacrifice his soul, family, and money for the sake of the Creator.

While the above āyah used a seemingly transactional word 'sell', it is used non-literally but rather holistically affirming a sense of sacrifice for the noble cause of dying for in the path of Allah. Realistically, for a transactional relationship to be effective, the 'seller' and the 'buyer' need to execute the deal immediately or contractually at intervals where specific terms and conditions are followed; a thing which is not feasible with martyrdom as a non-materialistic deal where a person sacrifices his/her soul. This holistic approach in interpretation can help modern Muslim interpreters and non-Muslim scholars understand better this verse and some other similar verses in the Qur'ān such as chapter 2 verse 216, chapter 4 verse 74, and chapter 61 verse 10-11. This modern holistic understanding is, in our view, capable of defending noble values such as martyrdom in the Qur'ān and correcting some of the tarnished images about Muslim martyrs in modern times who find themselves forced to defend their creed and honor such as old-new case of the daily struggles of the people in Palestine. They do that, not as claimed by Moghadam and Cook, to solely gain pleasure in Paradise, but they altruistically take the initiative to defend their religion, as stated, regardless of the reward, which is surely promised by Allah.

In scholarly discourse, a frequently cited verse by Western academicians when discussing 'the martyrs' is as follows:

"Do not regard those who have been slain in the cause of Allah as deceased. Rather, they are alive, sustained in the presence of their Lord, rejoicing in what they have received of His bounty. They are comforted by the absence of fear and grief for those who are yet to join them, celebrating the divine blessings and grace assured that Allah does not allow the reward of the believers to perish" (Surah 3:169-171). This verse provides a profound insight into the Islamic view of martyrdom, depicting it as a continued, blessed existence rather than an end.

Al-Qurṭubī's view is that martyrs in the above āyāt (verses) are not only revealed to praise the *shuhadā* of *Uḥud* as the second battle in the history of Islam. Rather, the interpretations of these āyāt can be generalized to include all the *shuhadā* who die while defending the path of

²⁸ Riḍā. Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm. Vol. 11. p. 49

²⁹ In the Qur'ān chapter 4 verse 74 the word "trade", and in the 61: 10-11 the word "bargain" occur, conveying almost the same rhetorical meaning. See: Haleem, *The Qur'an: A New Translation*, pp. 57, 370 f.

³⁰ Al-Sha'rāwī, Muḥammad Mutawallī. Tafsīr Al-Sha'rāwī. Vol. 9. p. 5509.

³¹ Moghadam, Assaf. "Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26, no. 2 (2003): p. 72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100390145215>.

Allah.³² Unlike some other āyāt such as chapter 2 verse 154 which confirm that martyrs are alive in paradise, these āyāt provide some details about the type of life and enjoyment the *shuhadā* experience in paradise. This is one of the very few interpretations where an agreement is identified among non-Muslim western scholars and modern Muslim Qur’ān interpreters.³³

Furthermore, Al-Sha’rāwī thoughtfully remarks on the enigmatic essence of the martyr's existence, a reality solely within the divine knowledge of Allah, as noted in his Tafsir³⁴. This contemplation effectively addresses a contentious theological dialogue among Islamic scholars, including al-Qurṭubī. The discourse delves into whether the recompense for martyrs is tangible sustenance or is limited to spiritual commendation, a topic debated vis-à-vis Western academic assertions. The provision for the *shuhadā* is described by some as primarily the vocal admiration for their ultimate sacrifice³⁵. Yet, al-Qurṭubī himself leans towards a literalist view, affirming that martyrs are bestowed with nourishment and dwell within avian forms in Paradise, a stance corroborated by the canonical hadith narrated by Ka’b ibn Mālik, elucidating, "The spirits of the martyrs dwell in the insides of green birds and eat of the produce of the trees of Paradise"³⁶.

The discourse culminates with a clear invocation of the term *shuhadā* in its plural form, signifying the collective embodiment of martyrdom.

﴿وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ ، وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا﴾ [سورة النساء :

69]

“Whosoever obeys God and the Messenger will be among those He has blessed: the messengers, the truthful, those who bear witness to the truth, and the righteous – what excellent companions these are!” (Chapter 4 verse 69)

Classical and contemporary scholars exhibit a spectrum of interpretations regarding the reference to "al-*shuhadā*" (**those who bear witness to the truth**) in the mentioned verse. Al-Qurṭubī, in his commentary on this āyah, posits two dimensions: a broad and a narrow interpretation. Broadly, he suggests the verse encompasses anyone who has been martyred in Allah's path. More narrowly, he specifically cites the martyred Rightly-Guided Caliphs: ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, and ‘Alī (may Allah be pleased with them), as the primary referents.

While al-Qurṭubī's general interpretation is widely embraced, reflecting the esteemed status of all martyrs in the afterlife, his specific identification of the three Caliphs as the sole referents is presented without explicit evidentiary support in his exegesis. Although it is undisputed that these Caliphs are embraced within the broader martyrs' category, the critique lies in the absence of detailed justification for the exclusive focus on these three figures in the

³² Al-Qurṭubī. *Al-Jāmi’ li Ahkām al-Qur’ān*. Vol. 4. p. 268.

³³ Cook, David. *Martyrdom*. p. 31

³⁴ Al-Sha’rāwī, Muḥammad Mutawallī. *Tafsīr Al-Sha’rāwī*. Vol. 3. p. 1870.

³⁵ Al-Qurṭubī. *Al-Jāmi’ li Ahkām al-Qur’ān*. Vol. 4. pp. 269 f.

³⁶ Al-Tirmiḏī. *Jāmi’ al-Tirmiḏī*. No. 1641. In *Mawsū’at al-ḥadīth al-Sharīf: Al-Kutub al-Sittah*. Riyadh: Dār al-Sālām li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī’, 1999. p. 1820

specific interpretative scope. This points to a scholarly expectation for comprehensive evidence when delineating such specific exegeses.

Turning to modern exegetes like Riḍā, *al-shuhadā'* in the *āyah* above are the ones who are determined to defend truth on earth. Their determination, which is translated into a practical fighting demonstration through the sacrifice of their souls in the path of Allah, shows that they are genuine seekers of truth and justice. This modern Muslim view is rarely reflected, let alone embraced, by non-Muslim Western scholars, as far as their writings on martyrdom in the Qur'ān is concerned. This Islamic understanding is systematically misrepresented and equated with terrorism and violence.³⁷ This study is warning siren that may hopefully appeal to non-Muslim Western scholars who sometimes approach the noble martyrdom in the Qur'ān loaded with their anti-Muslim cultural and religious packages. It is also a call to humbly dig deep into classical and modern exegetical sources to reach fair understandings that may help them understand martyrdom in a better way and heal the wounds that continuously bleed as a result of offending mainstream Muslim scholars and general members of the international community of Muslims.

A closer look at the *āyāt* and their interpretations above reveals that the Qur'ān did not actually mention minute details about who the martyrs are. Rather, it mentioned relevant details to how they are rewarded in the afterlife. Like many other themes in the Qur'ān, the Prophetic Sunnah explains in detail what is mentioned in passing or left unexplained by the Qur'ān. While this study is focused on the Qur'ānic view of martyrdom, it is necessary, with the arrived at conclusion here, to briefly state here that many of the lexical and technical definition of martyrs, the difference between 'martyrs' and 'witness', many issues and questions related to martyrs are explained in detail by the Sunnah; an area that may arouse the intellectual curiosity of modern Muslim researchers to delve into using English and other languages as a medium of communication to reach out to a wider non-Muslim academic readership. The possible misunderstanding or potential bias of non-Muslim Western scholars led them to claim that '*istishhād*' is not a pure the Qur'ānic term.

Conclusion:

This above inquiry has effectively unraveled the nuanced dimensions of '*istishhād*' as delineated in the Qur'an. By drawing a scholarly comparison between the classical exegetical works of luminaries like al-Qurṭubī and al-Rāzī, and the contemporary interpretations of Rashīd Riḍā and al-Sha'rāwī, this research has made a significant contribution to Islamic scholarly discourse. It has revealed a rich mosaic of intellectual thought, tracing both the enduring legacy and the progressive evolution of the understanding of martyrdom across different epochs. Furthermore, the study critically addresses the oversimplification of '*istishhād*' in prevalent Western discourses, advocating for a more layered and well-informed international conversation on this pivotal Qur'ānic concept.

The research highlights the imperative of integrating a more diverse array of Islamic perspectives in future scholarly endeavors. This expansion beyond the Sunnī-centric approach to encompass a variety of Islamic doctrinal schools will undoubtedly deepen the comprehension of pivotal concepts such as '*istishhād*.' Additionally, the study recommends engaging with non-

³⁷ Cheong, Pauline Hope, and Jeffrey R. Halverson. 2010. "Youths in Violent Extremist Discourse: Mediated Identifications and Interventions." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 12: 1104–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610x.2010.523862>, p. 1118.

Islamic academic perspectives on martyrdom to cultivate a more comprehensive and ecumenical understanding, thus fostering meaningful interfaith and intercultural dialogues. The study also underscores the importance of contextualizing *'istishhād'* within contemporary socio-political and global religious narratives, thus ensuring its relevance and applicability in current discourse.

In terms of future scholarly pathways, this study suggests undertaking comparative analyses of the concept of martyrdom across diverse religious traditions. Such explorations are poised to yield insightful interfaith and cross-cultural perspectives. Investigating how various interpretations of *'istishhād'* resonate within Muslim communities globally could shed light on the intricate socio-cultural dynamics prevalent within the Muslim *ummah* today. Furthermore, a critical analysis of the portrayal of martyrdom in global media narratives and its consequent impact on the public perception of Islam and Muslims is warranted, offering vital insights into counteracting prevalent stereotypes and misconceptions.

In the final analysis, a focused examination of gender-specific interpretations of *'istishhād'* and their distinct impacts on men and women in Muslim societies emerges as an area of critical importance. Such an investigation promises to substantially enhance the discourse surrounding gender within Islamic theological studies. This exploration is not merely academic; it has profound implications for understanding the lived realities of Muslim communities. By embarking on these suggested avenues of research, the scholarly community is poised to deepen its comprehension of *'istishhād'*, effectively bridging its historical underpinnings with contemporary interpretations and practices. This endeavor aligns with the enduring tradition of Islamic scholarship while simultaneously addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by the modern Muslim world.

References

- Abdel Haleem, M. A. S. *The Qur'an: A New Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Afsaruddin, Asma. "Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought and History." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. Published online March 3, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.46>.
- Afsaruddin, Asma. "Dying in the Path of God: Reading Martyrdom and Moral Excellence in the Qur'an." In *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam*, edited by Sebastian Günther and Todd Lawson, Vol. 1, pp. 162-181.
- Aleqāni, Maḥmūd, Murtaḍha Muahhari, and Ali Shari'ati. *Jihād and Shahādat: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam*. Edited by Mehdi Abedi and Gary Legenhausen. Houston, Texas: Institute for Research and Islamic Studies, 1986.
- Al-Miṣbāḥ, 'Ādil Jāsīm 'Alī. *Al-Shahīd fī al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah: Min Wāqī' al-Kutub al-Sittah*. Kuwait: Maktabat al-'Imām al-ḡahabī li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 2008/1429.
- Al-Nimr, 'Abd al-Mun'im. *Ilm al-Tafsīr: Kayfa Nasha' wa-Taṭawwara Ḥatta Intaha Ila 'Aṣrina al-Ḥāḍir*. Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī, 1985/1405.
- Al-Qurṭubī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣār. *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*. Vol. 2. Cairo: Dār al-Sha'b, n.d.
- Al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Tamīmīmī. *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr aw Mafātīḥ al-Ghaib*. Vol. 4. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2000.
- Al-Sha'rāwī, Muḥammad Mutawallī. *Tafsīr Al-Sha'rāwī*. Vol. 6. Cairo: Akhbār al-Yawm, 1991.
- Al-Tirmiḏī. *Jāmi' al-Tirmiḏī*. No. 1641. In *Mawsū'at al-ḥadīth al-Sharīf: Al-Kutub al-Sittah*. Riyadh: Dār al-Sālām li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1999.

- Amin, Elsayed Mohamed Abdalla. *Terrorism from a Qur'anic Perspective: A Study of Selected Classical and Modern Exegeses and Their Interpretation in the Modern Context*. PhD dissertation submitted to the University of Birmingham. Birmingham, 2010. p. 14.
- Badawi, Elsaid M., and Muhammad Abdel Haleem. *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Cheong, Pauline Hope, and Jeffrey R. Halverson. "Youths in Violent Extremist Discourse: Mediated Identifications and Interventions." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 12: 1104–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610x.2010.523862>, 2010.
- Choi, Seung-Whan, and Benjamin Acosta. "Sunni Suicide Attacks and Sectarian Violence." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 7 (2020): 1371–90, at 1373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1472585>.
- Cook, David, and Olivia Allison. *Understanding and Addressing Suicide Attacks: The Faith and Politics of Martyrdom Operations*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2007.
- Ganor, Boaz. "Targeted Killings: Ethical & Operational Dilemmas." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 33, no. 2 (2021): 353–366. p. 357, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003222873-11>
- Hornby, A.S. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. Edited by Jonathan Crowther. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Lawson, B. Todd. "Martyrdom." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, edited by John L. Esposito, Vol. 3, 54. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Lewis, Bernard. *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*. New York: The Modern Library, 2003.
- Moghadam, Assaf. "Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26, no. 2 (2003): 65–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100390145215>.
- Riḍā, Muḥammad Rashīd. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm: Al-Mushtahir bi 'ism Tafsīr al-Manār*. Vol. 10. 2nd ed. Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1947/1366.
- Santoso, Dri. 2022. "The Dynamics of Muslim Interpretation of Jihad Verses: Between Morality and Military." *Altahrir* 22 (1): 49–70. <https://doi.org/10.21154/altahrir.v22i1.3802>.
- Shehata, Asmaa. "Martyrdom in Early Islam: The Role of Martyrs' Mothers." *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies* 2, no. 7 (2022): 228–34. <https://doi.org/10.55677/ijssers/V02I07Y2022-01>.
- Slavicek, David Jan. "Deconstructing the Shariatic Justification of Suicide Bombings." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 6 (2008): 553–71. P. 564. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802064833>.
- Sulaymān, Mashhūr Ḥasan Mahmūd. *Al-Imām, al-Qurṭubī: Shaykh A'immat al-Tafsīr*. Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1993/1413.
- Nelson, Chad. Jr, Robert H. Woods. "Content Analysis." In *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, edited by Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, pp. 109-122.
- Troudi, Khaled. *Qur'anic Hermeneutics with Reference to Narratives: A Study in Classical Exegetical Traditions*. PhD dissertation submitted to the University of Exeter, 2011. pp. 80-82.
- Venkatraman, Amritha. "Religious Basis for Islamic Terrorism: The Quran and Its Interpretations." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 3 (2007): 229–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100600781612>.

East or west: Martyrdom

ORIGINALITY REPORT

17%

SIMILARITY INDEX

16%

INTERNET SOURCES

12%

PUBLICATIONS

9%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	etheses.bham.ac.uk Internet Source	3%
2	uu.diva-portal.org Internet Source	1%
3	ia601204.us.archive.org Internet Source	1%
4	ebin.pub Internet Source	1%
5	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	1%
6	Submitted to American Public University System Student Paper	1%
7	e-journal.um.edu.my Internet Source	1%
8	journals.openedition.org Internet Source	1%
9	nrl.northumbria.ac.uk Internet Source	1%

10	ejournal.iainmadura.ac.id Internet Source	1 %
11	archive.org Internet Source	<1 %
12	journal.kci.go.kr Internet Source	<1 %
13	www.academie-renseignement.gouv.fr Internet Source	<1 %
14	Submitted to Victoria University of Wellington Student Paper	<1 %
15	journals.iium.edu.my Internet Source	<1 %
16	Submitted to Nanyang Technological University Student Paper	<1 %
17	ejournal.iainsurakarta.ac.id Internet Source	<1 %
18	digital.library.sbts.edu Internet Source	<1 %
19	irigs.iiu.edu.pk:64447 Internet Source	<1 %
20	ejournal.iainbengkulu.ac.id Internet Source	<1 %
21	krimdok.uni-tuebingen.de Internet Source	<1 %

<1 %

22

www.au.af.mil

Internet Source

<1 %

23

"Pluralism in Islamic Contexts - Ethics, Politics and Modern Challenges", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2021

Publication

<1 %

24

Submitted to The College of New Jersey

Student Paper

<1 %

25

Devin Stewart. "Dissimulation in Sunni Islam and Morisco *Taqiyya*", *Al-Qanṭara*, 2014

Publication

<1 %

26

Submitted to International Islamic University Malaysia

Student Paper

<1 %

27

Submitted to Kolej Universiti Islam Sultan Azlan Shah

Student Paper

<1 %

28

Marie-Luisa Frick, Andreas Th. Müller. "Islam and International Law", Brill, 2013

Publication

<1 %

29

Mwiza Sikamikami, Brian Mumba, Kavuyi Kamelu. "Examining Reporting of Gender-Based Violence Incidents by Men in Intimate Relationships in Zambia: A Case Study of

<1 %

Chilenje Township", Open Journal of Social Sciences, 2023

Publication

30	dokumen.pub Internet Source	<1 %
31	ia801901.us.archive.org Internet Source	<1 %
32	www.scribd.com Internet Source	<1 %
33	oxfordre.com Internet Source	<1 %
34	Ahmed Al-Dawoody. "The Islamic Law of War", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2011 Publication	<1 %
35	docslib.org Internet Source	<1 %
36	experts.azregents.edu Internet Source	<1 %
37	ia802304.us.archive.org Internet Source	<1 %
38	nacta.gov.pk Internet Source	<1 %
39	ia800300.us.archive.org Internet Source	<1 %

40

macsphere.mcmaster.ca

Internet Source

<1 %

41

Mohamed Elewa Badar, ElSayed M. A. Amin, Noelle Higgins. "The International Criminal Court and the Nigerian Crisis", International Human Rights Law Review, 2014

Publication

<1 %

42

Labeeb Ahmed Bsoul. "Translation Movement and Acculturation in the Medieval Islamic World", Springer Science and Business Media LLC, 2019

Publication

<1 %

43

Peter Kitlas. "'Our Sultan Must Preserve His Religion, Just as You Preserve Your Own": Al-Ghazzāl and the Re-Forging of Islamic Diplomacy in Eighteenth-Century Morocco", Journal of Early Modern History, 2022

Publication

<1 %

Exclude quotes On

Exclude matches Off

Exclude bibliography Off

East or west: Martyrdom

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

/0

PAGE 1

PAGE 2

PAGE 3

PAGE 4

PAGE 5

PAGE 6

PAGE 7

PAGE 8

PAGE 9

PAGE 10

PAGE 11