



DEAD BEAUTY

BY STAHL STENSLIE



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00

INTRODUCTION

This book represents an ongoing artistic research about the representation of martyrs and martyrdom. It merely presents a little selection of all the images, ideas, ideals and representations that are available today. The book only covers a small selection of the many images of martyrs found circulating in contemporary culture, primarily on the Internet and in social media. As all art books, this one is also obviously biased in its selections. It attempts, however, to bring about a 'best of' selection – in as far as 'best of' can be used about such a lethal, killing and serious matter.

The background for my making of this book is found in my various art projects on the topic. The first being the Suicide Fashion Show, performed at Gallery Kapelica, Ljubljana, Slovenia in 2001 (see www.stenslie.net), the last being the Barbar Stahl cooperation on the Mothers of the Nation paintings.

Stahl Stenslie, Oslo, September 11th 2015

Towards Dead Beauty

I am prepared to die – Nelson Mandela [1]

From times immemorial, from Valhalla to Kobanî, through idealism and war, we humans idolize, even strive for the ultimate sacrifice in the name of a cause. Our culture honors, remembers, fetishizes those who die for their belief or kill themselves for the greater common good.

We have evolved not just towards a potentially socially beneficial self-sacrifice, but also into an idealized aesthetics of volunteered death. To be a martyr is to be beautiful. The martyr is the ultimate dead beauty of our times. The fleeing, drowned Syrian refugee perhaps the least recognized one.

The book title *Dead Beauty* reflects the aesthetic investigation of death as a signifier of beauty. That raises a few questions such as to why we find it beautiful? And how? Through which media? Whom?

The reasons for investigating the dead and deadly beautiful are many. In our culture of change, perhaps we should ask why death should be ugly at all? What if, in our age of war, insecurity and mass migration, this glorification of death is becoming one of our best means for survival through the hope that it ignites?

Where this text ends, the images continue the story. Why this graphic book on the aesthetics of martyrdom? It is the most aching, overarching aesthetical issue permeating our society of fear of today. From an academic and intellectual point of view it is perhaps impossible to understand the predominantly religious connotation of the martyring sacrifice. This publication is therefore an attempt to better grasp the meaning and significance of the martyr through the optics of art and aesthetics. It is therefore largely devoted to visual representations of martyrs and the martyrdom.

The best example of how the martyr has impacted our everyday life is the contemporary society of fear. 911 and the continued war on terror marked here the start of a cultural revolution and an unprecedented cultural shift, forcing us to shift focus from our western soil to the mid-eastern toil. Before, the Middle East was at best a dusty backyard inhabited by a slightly embarrassing sheik wasting his dollars bills randomly around while drunk on oil. The presumed mastermind behind the 911 attack, Atta Atta was

different. He was a terrorist to many a lost soul - and a hero and inspiration to more. (P.136 in Gilles Kepel (2009) *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom: The Future of the Middle East*. Harvard University Press.) The German theatre director Schlingensief staged a forceful theatre performance and exhibition inspired by the gargantuan consequences of that attack. He appears to have investigated a combination of Beuys statement that everybody is an artist and Stockhausen's comment that 911 was a work of art. (Tara Forrest, Anna Teresa Scheer (2010) *Christoph Schlingensief: Art Without Borders*. Intellect Books. P. 174.).

The case of Atta Atta illustrates some of the true power of Martyrdom. No weapon is more powerful than the human willingness to sacrifice oneself. Hence the martyr has also been called the F-16 of the poor. Their use of suicide bombers was the main reason why the 1500 ISIL soldiers could defeat 30.000 Iraqi soldiers in Mosul in 2014. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_Mosul) And it makes sense. Rather than loosing half your men in a frontal attack, it is better to sacrifice one soldier in one gigantic, terrifying suicide mission blast.

This represents the contemporary Martyrs Shift. Through the new wave of martyrs, as exemplified in ISIS use of suicide bombers, our cultural perception of the martyr is moving from being a victim of death –such as in Christianity- to becoming a suicidal killer instigating a violent and deadly sacrifice.

Short and bristle as this introductory text is, the rest of the book is representative of my ongoing visual research of the aesthetic topos of the martyr. The upcoming edition will present the aesthetic theory and history of the martyr at greater length.

This book might be seen as gruesome, but it is still an overview of some of the best looking martyrs. As such it is deadly beautiful. Therefore, to quote an Internet page devoted to the glory of the martyr: 'enjoy'. (http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=302_1431112419)



Image nr 1
Martyr poster,
Iran



Image nr 2
Martyr poster from
The Martyr Museum
in Tehran, Iran



Image nr 3
Martyrdom of St
Denis by Leon Bon-
nat (1885)



Image nr 4
Martyr poster, Iran

01

UNDERAGE



Image nr 5
Abu Ubaidah

ABU UBAIDAH

The Islamic State militant group in Iraq and Syria have announced the killing of its youngest fighter, a child soldier named al-Abu Ubaidah al-Absi. [1]



Image nr 6
Abu Ubaidah

Supporters of the deadly Sunni hardliner organisation said on social networking sites that Abu Ubaida is a child from the United Arab Emirates, who was fighting with ISIS in Syria, the Iraqi News notes. [3]

One of the photos posted on twitter shows the father standing next to Ubaidah with his arm around his shoulders as the two pose for the camera. [1]



Image nr 7
Mohamad-Katta

MOHAMAD-KATTA

The teenager's name was Muhammad al-Qatta, and he was 14 years old when witnesses said radical Islamists in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo pulled him from his coffee kiosk on Sunday and later executed him in a public square. [4]

"I saw my son, and saw him dead, and saw a fountain of blood coming out of him." [5]



Image nr 8



Image nr 9
Hamza al-Khatib

HAMZA AL-KHATIB

The boy, from a village called al-Jizah near the southern city of Deraa, has become the most famous victim yet of Syria's bloody chapter of the Arab spring.

Hamza was picked up by security forces on 29 April. On 27 May his badly mutilated corpse was released to his horrified family, who were warned to keep silent.



Image nr 10

Hamza was tortured and his swollen body showed bullet wounds on his arms, black eyes, cuts, marks consistent with electric shock devices, bruises and whip marks. His neck had been broken and his penis cut off. [6]



Image nr 11
Unknown, Gaza



Image nr 12
Unknown, Gaza



Image nr 13
Unknown, Gaza



Image nr 14
Unknown, Gaza









02

FEMME FATALE



Image nr 15
Kurdish female
fighter

ANGEL OF KOBANE

*The slayer of 100 ISIS soldiers - also known as the 'Angel of Kobane'.
[9]*

A Syrian Kurd woman, member of The People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel – YPG) who was fighting for his family has been beheaded by takfiri terrorist of ISIS in Kobani.



Image nr 16

According to reports, takfiri killer who shared his photo with head of a YPG's fighter has been sent to hell by YPG. [8]

KOBANE: ISIS beheads three Kurdish female fighters as one blows herself up taking several ISIS fighters with her. [7]



Image nr 17
Zeinab Ali Isa
Abu-Salem

ZEINAB ALI ISA ABU-SALEM

The 18-year-old female suicide terrorist, Zeinab Ali Isa Abu-Salem, who murdered two Israelis Wednesday and wounded some 30 others, was none other than a children's TV show hostess on a local Arab station in Shechem.

Ofra resident Debbie Segal, who noticed the terrorist approaching the bus stop moments before she blew herself up, described her as "extraordinarily beautiful." [10]



Image nr 18

“Suicide Bomber Zainab Abu Salem; Her head separated from her pure body, and her Ra’ala [Muslim headscarf] remains to decorate [her face]. Her place is in Paradise, where in the highest heavens, Zainab ... sister [who has been raised to the level] of men.”
[11]



Image nr 19
Neda Agha-Soltan

NEDA AGHA-SOLTAN

Iranians rose up after presidential elections in 2009, when then-President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad defeated opposition candidates Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi amid claims of vote manipulation and election rigging. The resulting protests became known as the Green Revolution or the Persian Awakening. Nedā Āghā-Soltān, 26, was shot in the heart by a Basij militia member while en route to join the protests. She immediately became a symbol of the uprising. [12]



Image nr 20

Her pupils roll to the side, blood streams out of her nose and mouth.

“Neda, don’t be afraid! Neda, stay with me. Neda, stay with me!” cries one man. Another man beseeches someone to take her in a car. Then the footage stops. [13]



Image nr 21
Ulrike Meinhof

ULRIKE MEINHOF

Ulrike Marie Meinhof (7 October 1934 – 9 May 1976) was a German left-wing militant. She co-founded the Red Army Faction (Rote Armee Fraktion) in 1970 after having previously worked as a journalist for the monthly left-wing magazine *Konkret*. She was arrested in 1972, and eventually charged with numerous murders and the formation of a criminal association. Before the trial concluded, Meinhof died in her cell in 1976. [14]



Image nr 22

According to Wienke Zittlaf, during her last visit in prison, Meinhof had told her:

“You can stand up and fight only while you are alive. If they say I committed suicide, be sure that it was a murder.” [15]



Image nr 23
Saint Agatha by
Lorenzo Lippi (1638)

AGATHA OF SICILY

One of the most highly venerated virgin martyrs of Christian antiquity, Agatha was put to death during the persecution of Decius (250–253) in Catania, Sicily, for her steadfast profession of faith. [16]

Amongst the tortures she underwent was the cutting off of her breasts with pincers. [17]

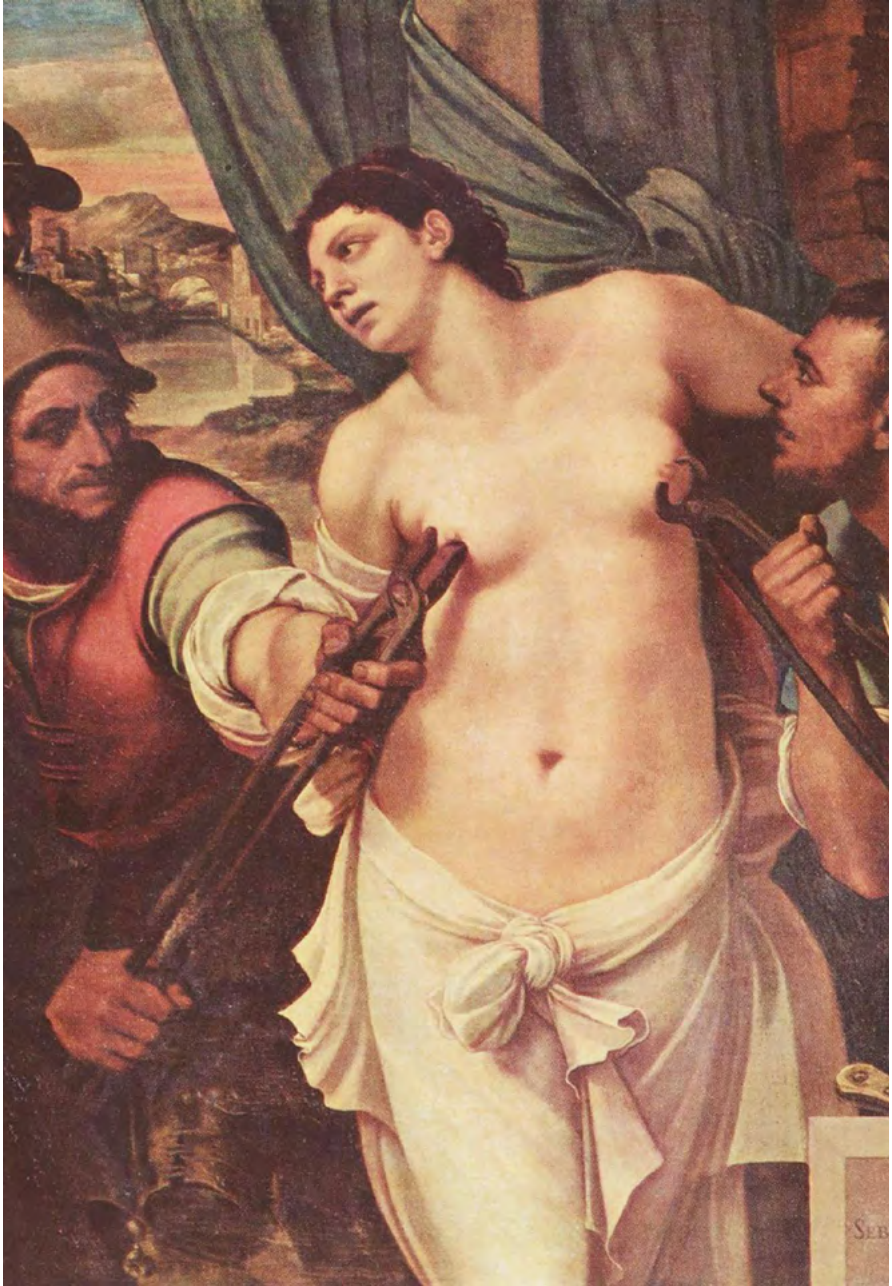


Image nr 24
The Martyrdom of
Saint Agatha by
Sebastiano del
Piombo (1519)







Image nr 26
Unknown, Gaza



Image nr 27
Unknown, Gaza

03

CHRISTIANS

SAINT STEPHEN / SAINT LAWRENCE /
SAINT SEBASTIAN / BARTHOLOMEW THE
APOSTLE



Image nr 28
Saint Stephen by
Luis de Morales
(1575)

SAINT STEPHEN

Stephen, traditionally venerated as the Protomartyr or first martyr of Christianity... [18] Accused of blasphemy, at his trial he made a long speech fiercely denouncing the Jewish authorities who were sitting in judgment on him and was then stoned to death. [18]

“Look! I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God!” [19]



Image nr 29
The Stoning of Saint
Stephen by Rem-
brandt (1625)



Image nr 30
Icon of Saint
Lawrence

SAINT LAWRENCE

Saint Lawrence was one of seven deacons who were in charge of giving help to the poor and the needy. When a persecution broke out, Pope St. Sixtus was condemned to death. [20] A well-known legend has persisted from earliest times. As deacon in Rome, St Lawrence was charged with the responsibility for the material goods of the Church and the distribution of alms to the poor. [21] The prefect was so angry that he had a great gridiron prepared, with coals beneath it, and had Lawrence's body placed on it (hence St Lawrence's association with the gridiron). [22]



Image nr 31
Painting of the
martyrdom

After the martyr had suffered the pain for a long time, the legend concludes, he made his famous cheerful remark, "I'm well done. Turn me over!" [21]



Image nr 32
Saint Sebastian by
Gustave Moreau
(1870 - 1875)

SAINT SEBASTIAN

St. Sebastian was a Roman martyr.

The Acts, probably written at the beginning of the fifth century, relate that he was an officer in the imperial bodyguard and had secretly done many acts of love and charity for his brethren in the Faith. When he was finally discovered to be a Christian, in 286, he was handed over to the Mauretanian archers, who pierced him with arrows; he was healed, however, by the widowed St. Irene. He was finally killed by the blows of a club. [23]



Image nr 33
Martyrdom of Saint
Sebastian by Sodo-
ma (c. 1525)



Image nr 34
Saint Bartholomew
by Anthony Van
Dyck

BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE

Christian tradition has three stories about Bartholomew's death: "One speaks of his being kidnapped, beaten unconscious, and cast into the sea to drown. Another account states that he was crucified upside down, and another says that he was skinned alive and beheaded in Albac or Albanopolis", near Başkale, Turkey. [24]



Image nr 35
Statue of St. Bartholomew, with his own skin by Marco d'Agrate (1562)

The account of Bartholomew being skinned alive is the most represented in works of art, and consequently Bartholomew is often shown with a large knife, holding his own skin (as in Michelangelo's Last Judgment). [24]

04

ASIAN

THICH QUANG DUC / QIU JIN / YUKIO
SEKI / KIYOSHI OGAWA / JOSÉ RIZAL /
26 MARTYRS OF JAPAN

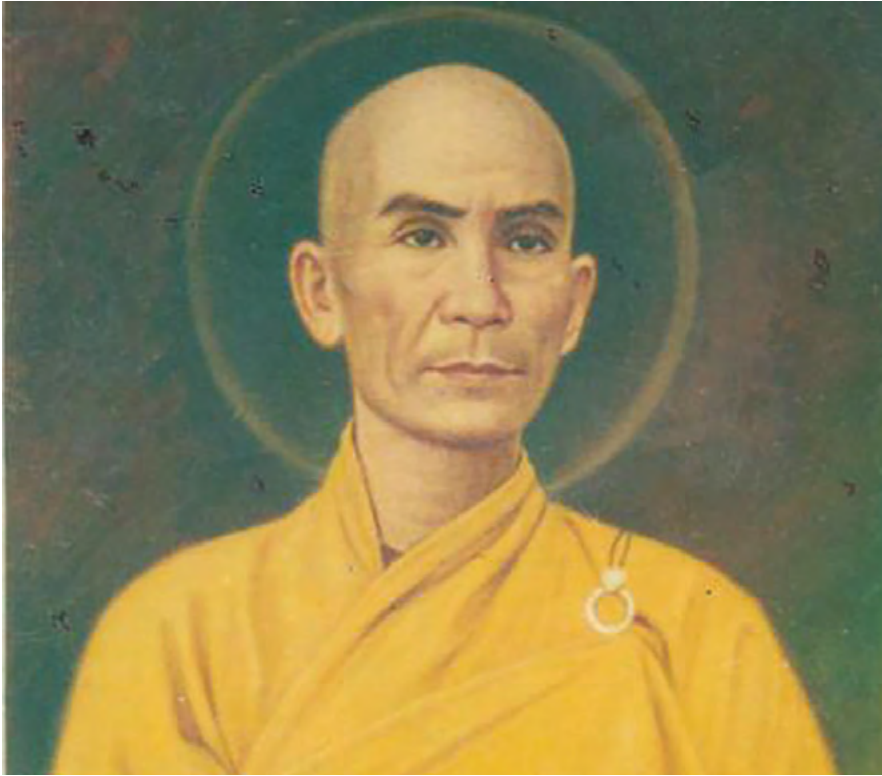


Image nr 36
Painting of Thich
Quang Duc

THICH QUANG DUC

Thich Quang Duc died on June 11, 1963 and was a Vietnamese Mahayana Buddhist monk who burned himself to death at a busy Saigon road intersection on June 11, 1963. He was protesting the persecution of Buddhists by South Vietnam's Ngo Dinh Diem administration. [25]



Image nr 37

During the burning process, he did not move a muscle, nor did he utter a sound, but remained surprisingly calm throughout. His composed behaviour was in stark contrast to the people around him who were wailing. [26]

QIU JIN

Qiu Jin (1875–1907) was a Chinese writer & poet, a strong-willed feminist who is considered a national hero in China. Also called “Jianhu Nüxia” (Woman Knight of Mirror Lake”), she was executed after participating in a failed uprising against the Qing Dynasty.

She was warned that officials would be coming for her at the Datong school, but she stayed anyway, writing to her sword sister Xu Yunhua that she was determined to die for the cause. [27]



Image nr 38
Qiu Jin



Image nr 39
Yukio Seki

YUKIO SEKI

"The plan is to crash-dive our Zero fighters loaded with 250-kilogram bombs, into the decks of enemy carriers, in order to insure the success of the Sho operation. You are being considered to lead such an attack unit. How do you feel about it?"

"You absolutely must let me do it", he answered after a couple of seconds, and it touched Tamai.

Image nr 40
Moment of
martyrdom



He led a unit of five bomb-armed Mitsubishi Zero fighters, crash-diving their planes deliberately into St. Lo, being the first kamikazes to sink an enemy ship. [28]

However, Seki was later quoted in saying "Japan's future is bleak if it is forced to kill one of its best pilots. I am not going on this mission for the Emperor or for the Empire... I am going because I was ordered to!" [29]



Image nr 41
Kiyoshi Ogawa

KIYOSHI OGAWA

As a kamikaze pilot, Ensign Ogawa's final action took place on May 11, 1945, during the Battle of Okinawa. Piloting a bomb-laden Mitsubishi Zero fighter during Operation Kikusui No. 6, Ogawa at the age of 22 flew through American anti-aircraft fire and attacked the U.S. Navy aircraft carrier USS Bunker Hill. He dropped a 250-kilogram (550 lb) bomb, never pulled out of the dive, and crashed deliberately into the flight deck near the control tower of the American aircraft carrier (...) Nearly 400 American sailors died with Ogawa and the ship was disabled for the remainder of the war. [30]



Image nr 42
Moment of
martyrdom

"I will make a sortie, flying over those calm clouds in a peaceful emotion. I can think about neither life nor death. A man should die once, and no day is more honorable than today to dedicate myself for the eternal cause. (...) I will go to the front smiling. On the day of the sortie too, and forever." [31]



Image nr 43
José Rizal

JOSÉ RIZAL

José Rizal (June 19, 1861 – December 30, 1896) was a Filipino nationalist during the tail end of the Spanish colonial period of the Philippines. An ophthalmologist by profession, Rizal became a writer and a key member of the Filipino Propaganda Movement which advocated political reforms for the colony under Spain. He was executed by the Spanish colonial government for the crime of rebellion after an anti-colonial revolution, inspired in part by his writings, broke out. Though he was not actively involved in its planning or conduct, he ultimately approved of its goals which eventually led to



Image nr 44
Moment of
martyrdom

Philippine independence. He is widely considered one of the greatest heroes of the Philippines, and is implied by Philippine law to be a national hero. [32]

"Tomorrow at 7, I shall be shot; but I am innocent of the crime of rebellion. I am going to die with a tranquil conscience." [33]

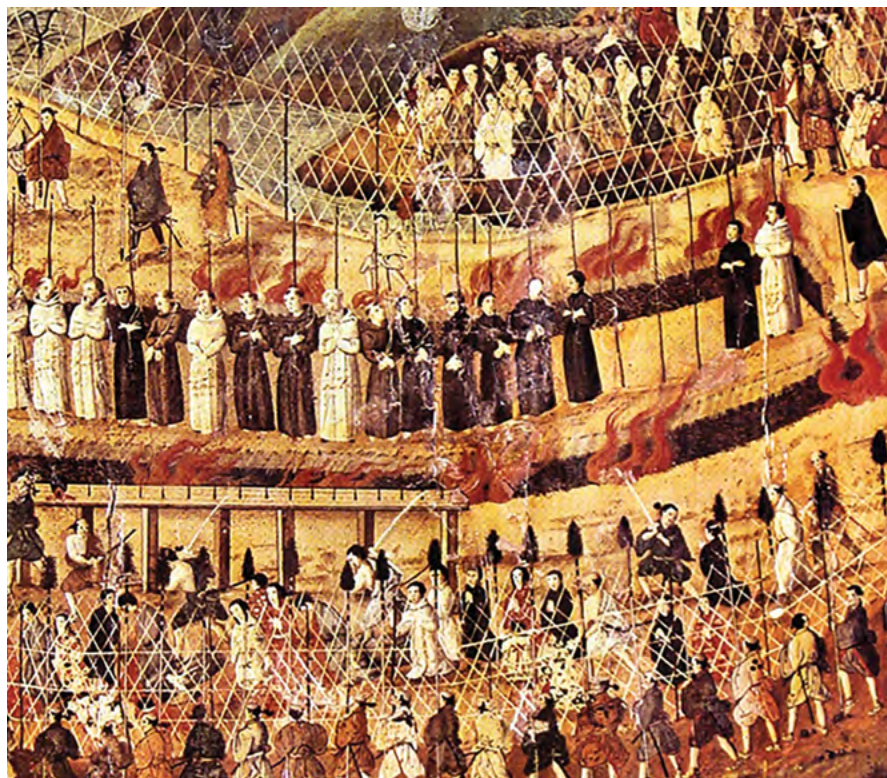


Image nr 45
The Christian martyrs of Nagasaki,
Japanese painting
(16-17th-century)

TWENTY-SIX MARTYRS OF JAPAN

The Twenty-six Martyrs of Japan refers to a group of Christians who were executed by crucifixion on February 5, 1597 at Nagasaki.

The first Martyrs of Japan were canonized in 1862. They are commemorated on February 5 when, on that date in 1597, twenty-six missionaries and converts were killed by crucifixion. [34]



Image nr. 46
The Christian martyr
Saint Francisco
Branco

05

EUROPEAN

RYSZARD SIWIEC / SÁNDOR BAUER /
JOAN OF ARC

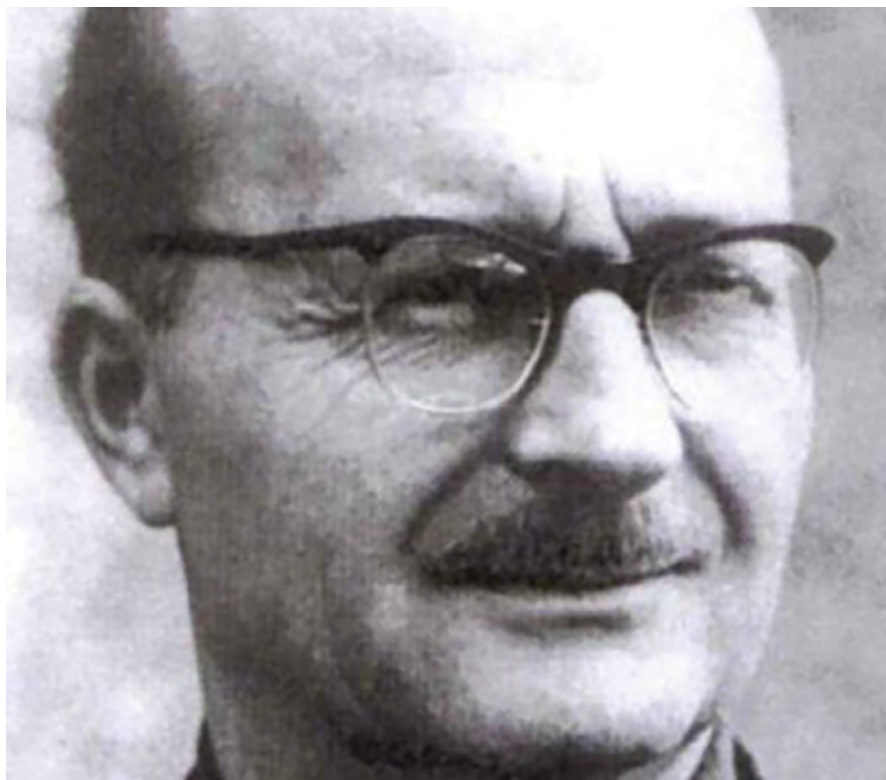


Image nr 47
Ryszard Siwiec

RYSZARD SIWIEC

On 8 September 1968, a fifty-nine-year-old office worker, Ryszard Siwiec, poured a solvent over himself in the 10th-Anniversary Stadium in Warsaw and set himself on fire in protest against the involvement of Polish military in the occupation of Czechoslovakia.

People, who still have a spark of humanity! Pull yourselves together! Hear my cry! A simple old man's cry, a cry of a son of a nation that beloved its own freedom as well as freedom of others above all, above its own life! Pull yourselves together. It's not too late yet! [36]



Image nr 48
Martyrdom of
Ryszard Siwiec

Dear Marysia! Don't cry! Don't waste your energy, you'll need it, I'm convinced that I've lived for 60 years for this moment. Forgive me, I couldn't do it any other way, for the truth not to be forgotten, for the humanity and freedom – I'm dying. But it's the lesser of two evils – like the death of millions, don't come to Warsaw, nothing can help me anymore, we're approaching Warsaw, I'm writing on the train and that's why it's a little crooked.

I feel so good, I feel so calm, so peaceful – like never before in my life! [37]



Image nr 49
Sándor Bauer

SÁNDOR BAUER

On 20 January 1969, Sándor Bauer, a sixteen year-old student, poured petrol over himself and lit himself on fire on the steps of the National Museum in Budapest. He did it in support of Jan Palach's act and in protest to the occupation of Czechoslovakia and the presence of the Soviet army in Hungary. [38]

He wanted to protest against the soviet occupation, and -like the czech student, Jan Palach -he burned himself alive on the stairs of the National Museum in Budapest. [39]



Image nr 50
Martyrdom of
Sándor Bauer

"To my parents: My dear mother and father. If I have ever been an ungrateful son, I ask for your forgiveness."

"I wish to live on, but the nation and the proletariat need my body, burnt to coal."

"Dear grandma, my beloved uncles and cousins, I send you all millions of kisses." [38]



Image nr 51
Painting of Joan
of Arc (c. 1485)

JOAN OF ARC

Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc), the peasant girl who became the savior of France. [40]

On May 30, Joan, 19 years old, was burned at the stake at the Place du Vieux-Marché in Rouen. Before the pyre was lit, she instructed a priest to hold high a crucifix for her to see and to shout out prayers loud enough to be heard above the roar of the flames. [41]



Image nr 52
Joan of Arc's
Death at the Stake
by Hermann Anton
Stilke (1843)

06

MUSLIM



Image nr 53
Mahdi Mohammad
Yaghi

MAHDI MOHAMMAD YAGHI

Mahdi Mohammad Yaghi was martyred on the 31st of July, 2013 while performing the sacred duty of Jihad.

Martyr Mahdi Yaghi had a charming look which captivated everyone who saw him, but this was not a unique feature in him, for this has been the case of heroes who have fallen on the sacred path of resistance for decades.

“you are the most beautiful dream”



Image nr 54

I wish I could be like him. But INSHA ALLAH I will teach my children to follow him and make me proud.
INSHA ALLAH

Ya Allah! He is so lucky, Him and EVERY saheed in the Syrian Arab Army And Hezbollah

I wish I can be his dust [42]



Image nr 55
Abu 'Umar Al
Maqdisi

ABU 'UMAR AL MAQDISI

Our great Mujaahid Commander of Lebanon, Abu 'Umar Al Maqdisi (aka Shehada Jawhar), has been martyred by the Apostate forces in Ain Al Hilweh.

Abu Umar said, Victory is not required from us. What is required is to be ready for a jihad in the name of Allah, ready to reinstate Islam's rule and Muslim caliphate. It is normal, if the army shoots at us, we will shoot back at them, its normal. When Abu 'Umar was asked if he was a "terrorist" he replied, Yes, a terrorist. What's the problem with that? If I want to terrorize the enemies of Allah,



Image nr 56

*Allah has blessed him with what he was
searching for.*

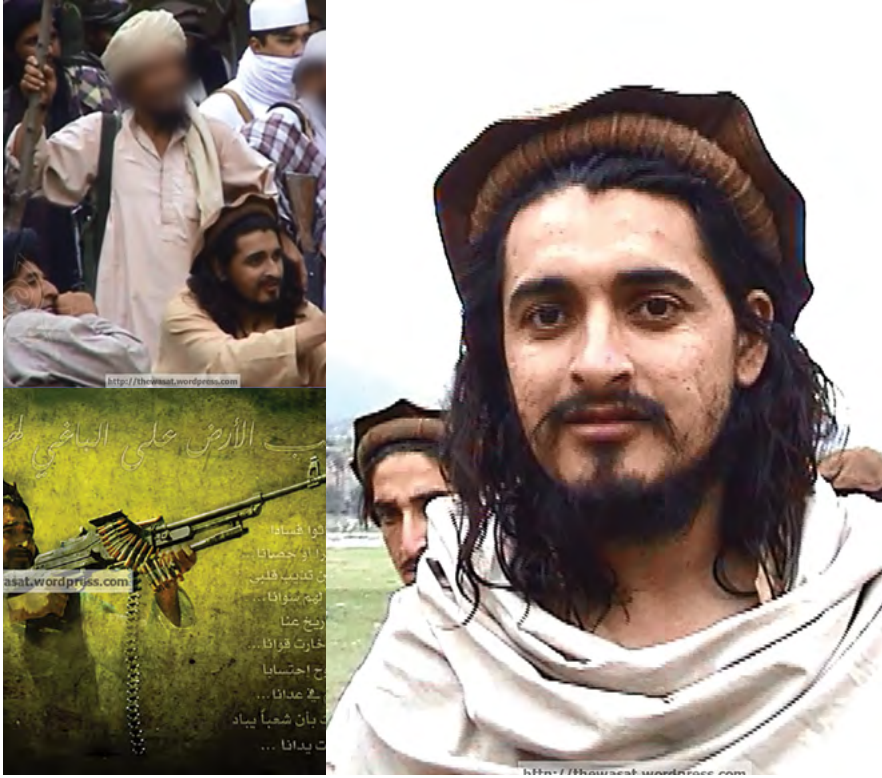
*A man who lived in obedience to Allah,
Searching for the opportunity to meet Allah as
a Shaheed. (...)*

And circled the enemies of Allah.

Allah accepted his effort,

And has joined him with the martyrs,

His wildest dreams have just come true. (...) [44]



HAKIMULLAH MEHSUD

Hakimullah Mehsud, Emir of Pakistan Tehrik -e-Taliban (TTP).

“Emir Hakimullah was an agent of Allah and he paid with his blood for it.

Pakistan rulers are agents of America and they spill Muslim blood and get paid dollars for it. Emir Hakimullah was a slave of Allah.” [45]



Image nr 57



Image nr 58
Abu Hafs al-Pakistani

ABU HAFS AL PAKISTANI

He was reportedly killed in June after being shot in the eye while defending a village in northern Syria from the army of President Bashar al-Assad.

He was only 23 ... but on the battlefield he was like a lion leading armies, and probably one of the best and most feared trained fighters. [46]



Image nr 59

Abu Hafs al-Pakistani wa Abu Khattab al-Pakistani. not only did they call to islam' they sacrificed for islam. Lions. [47]

When the mujahideen buried him they said he had both his index fingers raised.

We ask Allah to accept the actions of Abu Hafs by his mercy and give his family patience. [48]

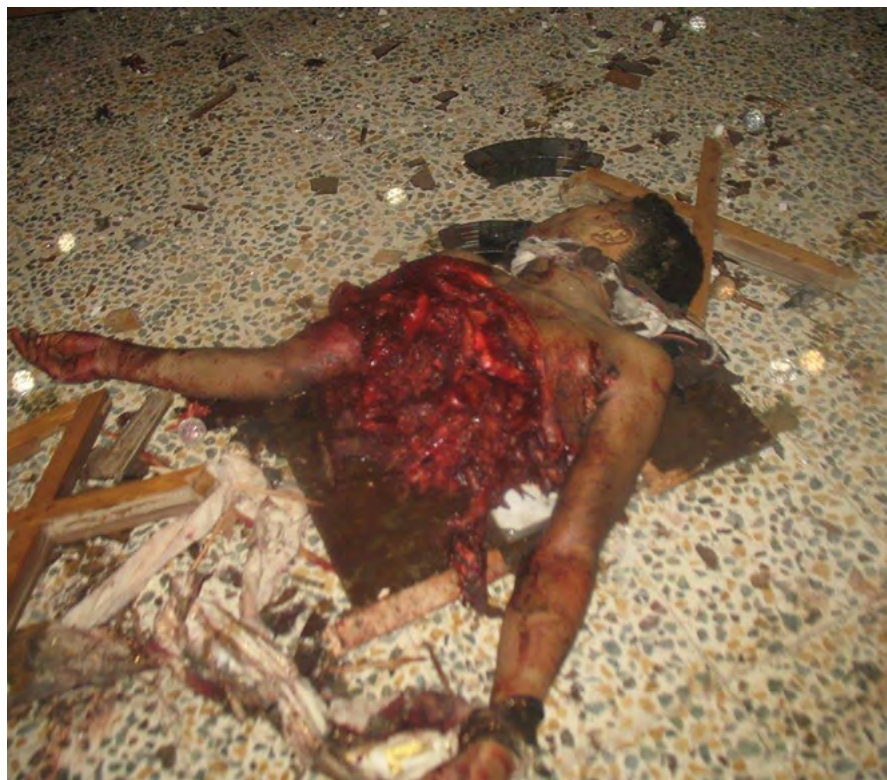


Image nr 60
Unknown

UNKNOWN SUICIDE BOMBER

From the 2010 Islamic raid on the Our Lady of Salvation Church in Iraq. Armed jihadis stormed the church during worship service, opened fire indiscriminately at the Christian worshipers, before detonating their suicide vests, which were "filled with ball bearings to kill as many people as possible."

*Mutilated carcass of one of the jihadis,
after detonating his suicide vest.
A martyrdom-seeking jihadi. [49]*



Image nr 61
Unknown



Image nr 62
Essam Omar
Saeed

ESSAM OMAR SAEED

*He spent his life in the cause of God
It is a jihad victory or martyrdom [50]*

Where met God a martyr - with the permission of Allah Almighty on Friday, 18 August 1436 H corresponding to 05/06/2015 AD following the collapse of the tunnel for the resistance, to leave our world and what is not, or rather not weakness or failure, but dedicated himself to God mujahid even God received it, we record of martyrs God Hassiba not Nczykah to God [51]

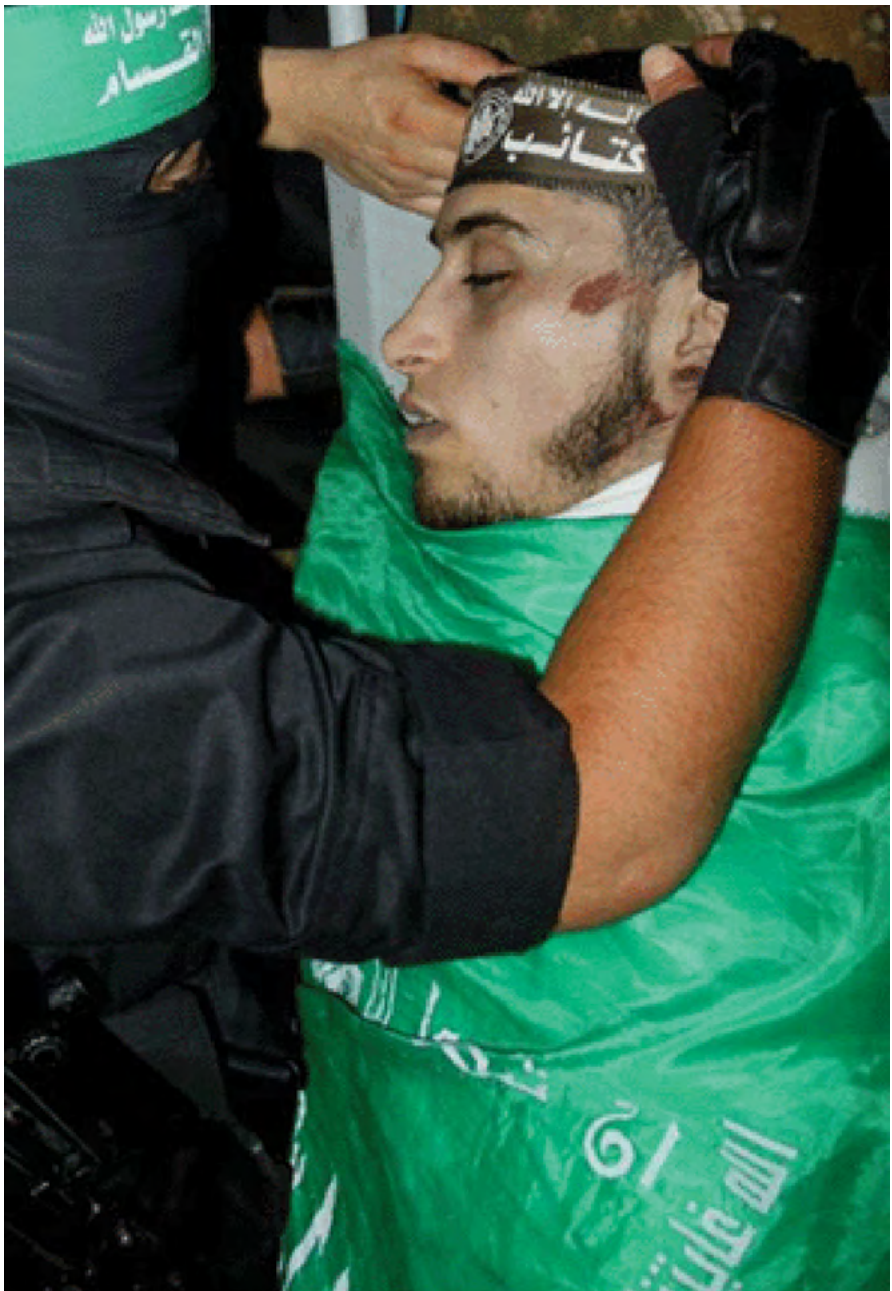


Image nr 63



Image nr 64
Mohammed Assi

MOHAMMED ASSI

*Martyr leader Mohammed Assi
The name that does not forget the
Zionists*

Dawn on Tuesday 10/22/2013 the Zionist occupation forces surrounded the martyr commander Mohammad Rabah Assi in one of the caves near the town of (Kafir grace) and asked him to turn himself in, but the martyr refused to surrender and fought an armed clash for more than four hours until the last bullet in his gun , to move up



Image nr 65

a martyr is coming to foul play in the same cave where the commander was martyred (Al-Quds Brigades) for the District of Ramallah.

From between the folds of his cave taken refuge to continue jihad against the Zionist enemy trip, dismount commander in the Al-Quds Brigades Mohammed Assi On this day, the cast of God Almighty martyr coming is the housekeeper, after he refused to turn himself in and resisted the dozens of Zionist soldiers heavily armed and hatred, over several hours continuously until the last bullet and the last breath. [52]



Image nr 66
Rafat Ahmed
Qudaih

RAFAT AHMED QUDAIH

We ask God Almighty to make their blood for free and light a fire on the aggressors ungodly, and a covenant not to miss this generous blood in vain and that we stay loyal to the path of the martyrs until we liberate our land from the impurity of the Zionists usurpers.

My dear brother, God bless you God bless the martyr of God and bring him into His Paradise Highest in paradise my brother to possible question is this martyr who Asthishd location strength near the back.



Image nr 67

12 God's mercy be upon
Allah accept it in Illiyun
with martyrs

God bless the martyr in difficult rest
in peace and I am God and to Him
we return [53]



Image nr 68
Abu Ahmed

ABU AHMED

Sham al-Islam Movement Emir Sheikh Abu Ahmed killed during al-Anfal Battle yesterday. Emir Hakimullah was an agent of Allah and he paid with his blood for it. Pakistan rulers are agents of America and they spill Muslim blood and get paid dollars for it.

Emir Hakimullah was a slave of Allah. Pakistan rulers are slaves of America. [54]



Image nr 69

*Syria is Protected by God.
With our Blood we
Sacrifice for Syria.*



Image nr 70
Abu Khattab
al-Kurdi

ABU KHATTAB AL-KURDI

Abu Khattab al-Kurdi, a Kurdish IS-fighter from Halabja, who was allegedly killed in Kobani.

The majority of fighters of the Islamic State (IS) in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) were Kurds. He wrote this after clashes between PKK-supporters and Hizbullah supporters in Cizre

In Kobani, some Kurds were fighting Kurds [55]



Image nr 71



Image nr 72
Unknown

*A martyr will see his
place in Paradise at
the point of Death
[56]*



Image nr 73
Unknown

*Imagine your last
breathe leaves you
feeling like this. [57]*













شبكة فلسطين للحوار «حربي 1»
صور حصرية للشهيد القائد محمد شاكر كلاب









Mothers of The Nation

A collaborative project by Barbar Stahl

The paintings are post-mortem portraits of the Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg along with its closest allies Minister of Finance Siv Jensen and Minister of Defence Ine Eriksen Søreide (as of 2015). The images are martyr portraits, painted in classic European technique and style. Design and positioning is inspired by images of martyrs as found in some contemporary Muslim contexts. The images can be perceived and interpreted on several levels. There is no one correct reading of the paintings.

If we read Siv, Erna and Ine as vulnerable individuals, then the images can be perceived as cruel. If we however consider them as what they actually are: the most powerful women in Norway, so they appear to be our nation's strongest symbols. These three women are to our Nation what the mountains, the fjords and romance was to the Norwegian national painters Tidemand and Gude. Therefore the pictures are contemporary portraits of the nation. They are like 'Brudeferden i Hardanger': stately, magnificent -and fictitious- images of Norway.

If we exchange our cultural optics and observe them the through the Muslim eye, then they an also be interpreted as

MOTHERS OF THE NATION

ERNA SOLBERG / SIV JENSEN /
INE ERIKSEN SØREIDE

heroes. They are the heroes of the nation. The many contemporary death portraits of martyrs can be read as respectful portrayals of noble and righteous actions. The paintings can therefore be seen as renditions of honourable acts. Martyr motives of the Dead can be perceived by many as terrifying, but for others as inspiring and motivating?

Erna, Siv and Ine are strong personae who believe in Norway and are willing to give everything for the Nations. The ultimate sacrifice is a part of their roles and the social mandate they have taken upon themselves. They are our living heroes. They are the ones who daily influence, shape and foster us. Even in death. Or? The fact that possible interpretations of the images quickly shift from Pro- to contra makes the paintings ambiguous. They inflict afterthoughts about difficult subjects, culturally as well as religiously and politically.

The pictures are classic Memento Mori (remember death) motifs. They can be understood both as a warning and as a call to arms. Images of martyrs are made to incite us. Erna, Siv and Ine are archetypal in their portraits. They are our Mothers of the Nation. Dead or alive.



Image nr 74
Norway's Prime
Minister: Erna
Solberg



Image nr 75
Mother of the
Nation: Erna
Solberg



Image nr 76
Norway's Minister of
Finance: Siv Jensen



Image nr 77
Mother of the
Nation: Siv Jensen



Image nr 78
Norway's Minister
of Defence: Ine
Eriksen Søreide



Image nr 79
Mother of the
Nation: Ine Eriksen
Søreide

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