

# The Path to Paradise



## **The Path to Paradise** : The Inner World of Suicide Bombers and Their Dispatchers Dr. Anat Berko

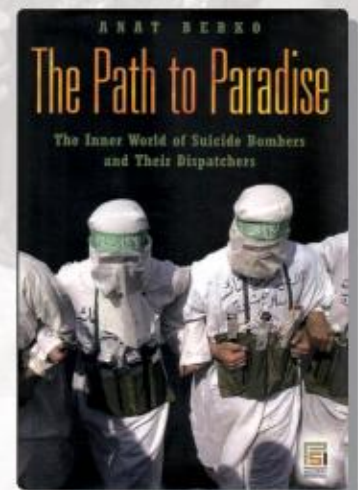
Suicide Bombers are often compared to “smart bombs”. From the point of view of their dispatchers, they are highly effective, inexpensive forms of weaponry, and there is no need to invest in their technological development. Suicide bombers are in fact smarter than smart bombs because they can choose their own target, and react to circumstances on the ground to ensure maximum damage, destruction, and death. Of course, unlike smart bombs, **suicide bombers think and feel; they have histories, stories, beliefs, desires—in short they have an inner world.**

**The Path to Paradise** reveals this inner world for the first time, and answers a multitude of questions about what really drives suicide bombers: Do male bombers really believe that death will transport them to paradise where they will be greeted by 72 virgins? Are they victims of unbearable pressure to commit their acts of terror? What are female bombers promised in the after-life? Is there something that links all bombers?

**The Path to Paradise** also reveals the world of those who “drop the smart bomb”—the dispatchers. Who are these people who persuade others to go calmly to their horrific deaths?

**Dr. Anat Berko**, who served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Israel Defense Forces, is a member of both Israel's Counter-Terrorism Team and Israel's National Security Council, and serves as an advisor to senior government officials. She is currently a Research Fellow at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, where she also lectures at the Center's Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Security.

To learn about the inner worlds of suicide bombers and their dispatchers, Dr. Berko has for the last 13 years entered Israel's most heavily secured prison cells and conducted extensive interviews with suicide bombers who failed their missions, as well as with their dispatchers—including former Hamas spiritual and operative leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin.



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## Praise for *The Path to Paradise*

**The Path to Paradise** is an astounding document, an original and authoritative account of the inner worlds of suicide bombers and their dispatchers. Dr. Anat Berko brings to her work a unique combination of academic expertise, and, as the daughter of Jewish refugees from Iraq, genuine cultural understanding of the world of her subjects. The depth of both her professional and personal knowledge of her subject make this book a must-read for anyone interested in the real and complex causes of the suicide terror that is spreading like wildfire throughout the world, and of which we in the US felt the devastating effects on September 11th, 2001.

**George P. Fletcher**, Columbia University  
Author of *Romantics at War: Glory and Guilt in the Age of Terrorism*

The subjects of this book—would-be terrorists whose lives were spared, because their missions were aborted when they were discovered by Israeli security forces or by alert bystanders—describe their desires and goals to Anat Berko with extraordinary candor. Their motivations, from self-hatred to hatred of Jews, shed light on their lives and culture—though in this case the light they shed is more like darkness visible. Dr. Berko tells their stories with startling clarity, sensitivity, and insight.

**Avi Dichter**, Minister of Public Security, State of Israel  
Former head of the Israeli Security Agency, and current Minister of Internal Security

This is a serious, thorough, penetrating analysis of the dark and mysterious world of suicide bombers and their dispatchers. By spending thousands of hours with would-be suicide bombers, and their spiritual leaders, the author succeeds in conveying a vivid (and appalling) picture of their real motives. This book is essential reading for anyone trying to understand the phenomenon of suicide bombings and the ever-increasing threat of Islamic fundamentalism.

**Khaled Abu Toameh**, Veteran reporter and commentator on Palestinian affairs and correspondent, *The Jerusalem Post*

**The Path to Paradise** is an important and fascinating book. Anat Berko's extraordinary access to her subjects (failed suicide bombers and their handlers) makes this the most compelling—indeed, the best—book I have read on this topic.

**Steven Emerson**, Executive Director, the Investigative Project on Terrorism  
Author of *Jihad Incorporated: A Guide to Militant Islam in the United States*

Only by understanding the psychology of suicide bombers can we hope to counter this deadly behavior. Anat Berko's sensitive interviews of suicide bombers and their dispatchers detailed in **The Path to Paradise** provide remarkable insight into their inner world. A truly outstanding and revealing study.

**Jerrold M Post, MD**  
Director, Political Psychology Program  
Elliott School of International Affairs, The George Washington University