



Bombshell: Women and Terrorism

Mia Bloom

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Between 1985 and 2008, female suicide bombers committed more than 230 attacks—about a quarter of all such acts. Women have become the ideal stealth weapon for terrorist groups. They are less likely to be suspected or searched and as a result have been used to strike at the heart of coalition troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. This alarming tactic has been highly effective, garnering extra media attention and helping to recruit more numbers to the terrorists' cause. Yet, as Mia Bloom explains in *Bombshell: Women and Terrorism*, female involvement in terrorism is not confined to suicide bombing and not limited to the Middle East.

From Northern Ireland to Sri Lanka, women have been engaged in all manner of terrorist activities, from generating propaganda to blowing up targets. What drives women to participate in terrorist activities? Bloom—a scholar of both international studies and women's studies—blends scrupulous research with psychological insight to unearth affecting stories from women who were formerly terrorists. She moves beyond gender stereotypes to examine the conditions that really influence female violence, arguing that while women terrorists can be just as bloodthirsty as their male counterparts, their motivations tend to be more intricate and multilayered. Through compelling case studies she demonstrates that though some of these women volunteer as martyrs, many more have been coerced by physical threats or other means of social control.

As evidenced by the March 2011 release of Al Qaeda's magazine *Al Shamikha*, dubbed the jihadi *Cosmo*, it is clear that women are the future of even the most conservative terrorist organizations. *Bombshell* is a groundbreaking book that reveals the inner workings of a shocking, unfamiliar world.

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