

WEEPING IN MODERN JIHADI GROUPS

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INTRODUCTION

In the mid-2000s, the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, Abū Muṣ‘ab al-Zarqāwī, carried out acts of violence so brutal that he became known among his comrades as *al-dhabbāb*—the slaughterer.¹ The nickname was picked up by international media, and by the time he was killed in a US drone strike in 2006, he had become a symbol of the ruthless brutality of contemporary jihadi groups.² Less well known is that al-Zarqāwī was also known by the epithet *al-bakkā*—the Weeper.³ According to a former cellmate, ‘he cried constantly; he was very

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¹ Among other things, al-Zarqāwī’s group bombed the UN headquarters in Baghdad and carried out suicide bombings against Shi‘i mosques across Iraq. He also personally beheaded, on camera, the American hostage Nicholas Berg with a large knife in April 2004.

² ‘Jihadism’ is defined here as transnational violent Sunni Islamism. Some Muslims object to the association of jihad with the violent activities of such groups, but the term ‘jihadi’ is now an established term in academia and the media, including in the Muslim world. It owes its popularity to its convenience as shorthand for more cumbersome expressions. The militants themselves also use the adjective ‘jihadi’ extensively. In academic use, ‘jihadi’ is merely a descriptor with no normative value for Islamic debates on the nature of jihad.

³ *‘muḥādaratayn muhimma ad‘ukum li-samā‘ihā li-shaykhinā al-bakkā’ abū muṣ‘ab al-zarqāwī* [Two important lectures I invite you to hear, by our weeping shaykh Abū Muṣ‘ab al-Zarqāwī]. Online: <http://www.alboraq.info/showthread.php?t=114062&cs=21dd0eca1270421eff4f5a477b399498>, posted 22 June 2009 (last accessed 15 December 2015).

emotional, like a child'.⁴ One of his lieutenants remarked that '[he] wept frequently, especially when the topic was Muslim women and the rapes they suffer. The brother in charge of his audio statements had to do retakes all the time'.⁵ As we shall see in this article, al-Zarqāwī was not unique in this regard, nor did his comrades mean to disparage him by this depiction. Weeping is widespread in contemporary jihadi groups, and those who cry are seen as better warriors for it. This is indicative of a previously underappreciated Sufi influence on modern jihadism.

Militant weeping is intriguing for several reasons. Some non-Muslims may find it puzzling that a subculture associated with extreme violence and hypermasculinity should encourage crying. Those familiar with the appreciation for religious tears in the Islamic tradition will be less surprised, but may still wonder how militants professing rigid Salafism came to embrace a practice primarily associated with Sufism and Shi'ism, their ideological archenemies. Moreover, the image of the militant consumed by religious emotion goes against the common view of modern radicals as opportunists with a superficial commitment to Islam. Despite these conundrums, the phenomenon of weeping in modern jihadi groups has gone virtually unstudied, probably due to the difficulty of obtaining information about life on the inside of such groups.

In this article I take advantage of the recent proliferation of primary sources on jihadi groups to offer a detailed, culturally contextualized description of their weeping practices. I ask when and why they weep, how their weeping compares to contemporary and past Islamic weeping practices, and what this tells us about jihadism and about weeping in Islam. The aim is primarily to improve our understanding of the religious worldview and internal culture of jihadi groups, but also to deepen our knowledge of weeping norms and practices in contemporary Islam. Empirically, the article focuses on transnational militant Sunni Islamist groups operating between approximately 1980 and today. This includes groups such as al-Qaida and Islamic State, their subsidiary organizations, foreign fighters who join them, and their active sympathizers. It excludes militant Islamists with a more nationalist orientation, such as Hamas or the Taliban. While the delineation between jihadi and non-jihadi militant Islamist groups is not razor-sharp and intra-jihadi differences are legion, there is broad consensus in the literature that the

⁴ 'al-zarqāwī kāna yabkī bi-stimrār [al-Zarqawī would weep constantly]', *Elaph.com*, 1 April 2005. (Last accessed 21 April 2015.)

⁵ 'min khafāyā al-amīr [Some secrets of the emir]', <http://www.altawhed.eb2a.com/vb/archive/index.php/t-1533.html>, posted 16 February 2013 (last accessed 21 April 2015).

transnational groups constitute a distinct ideological movement with a shared subculture.⁶

The clandestine nature and out-group hostility of jihadi groups limit the sources and methods available for studying intimate practices such as weeping. It is generally not possible to conduct traditional ethnographic work inside these communities, and they are selective about the information they release about themselves. However, over the past two decades, the amount of available primary sources on the inner workings of jihadi groups has increased considerably, primarily due to the Internet, which in the early 2000s became a platform for propaganda distribution and internal discussions. The growing number of defectors and counterterrorism investigations has also brought new sources into the public sphere. By aggregating the available sources, it is possible to piece together a fairly detailed picture of life in the jihadi underground, although it will never be as detailed as one obtained by participant observation. In this article, I draw on a variety of materials, such as texts and videos by jihadi groups, jihadi social media discussions, defector autobiographies, documentaries, and much more. Since references to weeping are spread out thinly over many different sources, I followed a slow procedure of noting down weeping references as I processed primary sources for other research projects. Having collected a substantial number of references over a ten-year period, I supplemented my data by conducting searches for weeping-related keywords in key databases and document collections. I then processed the evidence inferentially, attempting to detect patterns independently of my preconceptions, in the spirit of ethnography. Needless to say, sources and methods such as these can only provide a superficial overview, so the article should be treated as a first stab at mapping uncharted terrain, not as an exhaustive treatment.

As we will see, jihadi groups encourage their members to weep, and the crying occurs in a variety of situations, most of which conform with traditional Islamic norms about weeping. The jihadi weeping represents an effort at self-fashioning, an emulation of an ideal Muslim mode of behaviour rooted in the model of the Prophet and his companions, and an exercise in the production of Islamic authenticity. At the same time, modern militants have adopted ostentatious and semi-ritualized weeping practices reminiscent of those found in Sufism and Shi'ism. This adds to a growing body of evidence suggesting that contemporary jihadis have

⁶ See, for example, Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); and Thomas Hegghammer (ed.), *Jihadi Culture: The Art and Social Practices of Militant Islamists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

incorporated certain Sufi ideas and practices, in spite of their declared Salafism.

From here the article proceeds in four stages. First I take stock of the relevant academic literature on weeping. Then I look at what jihadis have said about weeping in their propaganda. The third section describes the main contexts in which modern militants weep. The fourth speculates about why there is so much weeping in jihadi groups.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT WEEPING

Weeping is a universal human behaviour and has therefore been studied extensively. Let us therefore look briefly at what we already know about weeping generally and about weeping in Islam.

The psychology and anthropology of weeping

Weeping has interested scholars for over a century, but has received increased attention in recent decades with the so-called affective turn in the social sciences and humanities.⁷ Broadly speaking there are two main strands in the literature: one concerned with the biology and psychology of weeping, and another with its manifestations and significance in specific cultures.

Psychologists such as the doyen of weeping research Ad Vingerhoets have established that emotional weeping is a distinctly human activity.⁸ It is believed to have an evolutionary basis, though its precise underpinnings remain unclear.⁹ Proneness to weeping is higher in children

⁷ For the beginnings of weeping research, see Alvin Borgquist, 'Crying', *The American Journal of Psychology*, 17/2 (1906): 149–205. For the affective turn, see David Lemmings and Ann Brooks, 'The Emotional Turn in the Humanities and Social Sciences' in *Emotions and Social Change: Historical and Sociological Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 3–18.

⁸ Ad Vingerhoets, *Why Only Humans Weep: Unravelling the Mysteries of Tears* (Oxford University Press, 2013). Emotional weeping is to be distinguished from reflexive weeping in response to, say, pain or dry eyes, which is also found in animals.

⁹ William H. Frey, *Crying: The Mystery of Tears* (Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1985); Ad J. J. M. Vingerhoets and Randolph R. Cornelius, *Adult Crying: A Biopsychosocial Approach* (London: Routledge, 2012); Michael Trimble, *Why Humans Like to Cry: Tragedy, Evolution, and the Brain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

than in adults and in women more than men, but it varies even more between individuals, for unknown reasons.¹⁰ The psychological functions of weeping remain debated, but most agree that weeping helps regulate emotions and may be functionally related to laughing.¹¹ Most psychologists believe that weeping also has an important communicative function and suspect that the evolutionary basis for weeping may lie in the social domain.¹² Crying is notably believed to facilitate social attachment and trust-building.¹³

Meanwhile, anthropologists and humanities scholars have been concerned with weeping norms and practices across human cultures. Starting with Alfred Radcliffe-Brown's famous study of the Andaman islanders, many studies have described in depth the cultural significance of weeping in specific communities and historical periods.¹⁴ We know that weeping has always been socially significant, for it features prominently in world literature from the Epic of Gilgamesh onwards, and ritualized weeping goes back to at least Ancient Egypt.¹⁵ At the same time, there is considerable variation

¹⁰ Dalbir Bindra, 'Weeping: a problem of many facets', *Bulletin of the British Psychological Society*, 25/89 (1972): 281–4.

¹¹ S. M. Labott and R. B. Martin, 'The stress-moderating effects of weeping and humor', *Journal of Human Stress*, 13/4 (1987): 159–64; Helmuth Plessner, *Laughing and Crying: A Study of the Limits of Human Behavior* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

¹² Jeffrey A. Kottler, *The Language of Tears* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996).

¹³ Judith Kay Nelson, *Seeing Through Tears: Crying and Attachment* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Oren Hasson, 'Emotional tears as biological signals', *Evolutionary Psychology*, 7/3 (2009): 363–70; Geir Kaufmann *et al.*, 'The importance of being earnest: displayed emotions and witness credibility', *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 17/1 (2003): 21–34.

¹⁴ Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders: A Study in Social Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922). For diachronic perspectives, see, for example, Tom Lutz, *Crying: A Natural and Cultural History of Tears* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, repr. 2001); Thorsten Fögen, *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009); Elina Gertsman, *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Thomas Dixon, *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁵ *The Epic of Gilgamesh: the Babylonian epic poem and other texts in Akkadian and Sumerian* (London: Penguin Books [1999] 2003), 78, 91, 99, 185, 6, 191; Marcelle Werbrouck, *Les pleureuses dans l'Égypte ancienne* (Brussels: Ed. de la Fondation égyptologique Reine Elisabeth, 1938); Gary L. Ebersole, 'The function of ritual weeping revisited: affective expression and moral discourse', *History of Religions*, 39/3 (2000): 211–46.

across time and space with regard to which types of weeping are considered appropriate.

There are constants, however, one of which—the link between weeping and religion—is relevant to this study. In many cultures, religious experiences or religious rituals have been accompanied by weeping.¹⁶ Several religious traditions encourage weeping, and in some we see the phenomenon of ‘provoked religious weeping’, whereby the believer exerts an effort to weep in religious settings.¹⁷

Also of relevance here is that norms regarding male weeping have varied in time and space.¹⁸ In contemporary Western society, male crying is taboo, but in eighteenth-century Europe, certain forms of male weeping were considered a sign of cultural refinement. The same is true of weeping in military settings. Modern Western militaries have a stoic culture in which crying is generally frowned upon as a sign of weakness, but many warrior cultures throughout history have allowed for tears. The heroes of the *Iliad*, for example, wept profusely, as did Sir Lancelot in Chrétien de Troyes’ *The Knight of the Cart*.¹⁹ Moreover, several studies show that also Western soldiers cry in private despite prevailing norms, which suggests the hardship of warfare itself may be conducive to weeping.²⁰

¹⁶ See, for example, Piroska Nagy, ‘Religious weeping as ritual in the medieval West’, *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, 48/2 (2004): 119–37; Kimberley Christine Patton and John Stratton Hawley (eds.), *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹⁷ William A. Jr. Christian, ‘Provoked religious weeping in early modern Spain’ in John Davis (ed.), *Religions Organization and Religions Experience* (London: Academic Press, 1982), 97–114.

¹⁸ Catherine E. Ross and John Mirowsky, ‘Men who cry’, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 47/2 (1984): 138–46; Claes Ekenstam, ‘En historia om manlig gråt [A history of male weeping]’ in Claes Ekenstam et al. (eds.), *Rädd at falla: Studier i manlighet [Afraid to Fall: Studies in Masculinity]* (Stockholm: Gidlunds, 1998), 50–123.

¹⁹ Hélène Monsacré, ‘Weeping heroes in the *Iliad*’: *history and anthropology*, 1/1 (1 November 1984): 57–75; Sandra Newman, ‘Whatever happened to the noble art of the manly weep?’, *Aeon.co*, 9 September 2015.

²⁰ See, for example, Andre Loez, ‘Tears in the trenches: a history of emotions and the experience of war’ in Jenny Macleod and Pierre Purseigle (eds.), *Uncovered Fields: Perspectives in First World War Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 211–26; Vanda Wilcox, ‘“Weeping tears of blood”: exploring Italian soldiers’ emotions in the First World War’, *Modern Italy*, 17/2 (2012): 171–84.

Weeping in Islam

The literature on weeping in Islam is limited, but has yielded important insights.²¹ Broadly speaking, the Islamic tradition approves of weeping for spiritual reasons. The scriptural basis for allowing weeping is strong; Weeping is mentioned in seven Qur'ānic verses, notably in connection with exposure to the divine message. For example, it says of the early prophets that 'those who were given the knowledge before it when it is recited to them, fall down upon their faces prostrating [...] And they fall down upon their faces weeping; and it increases them in humility' (Q. 17:107–9), and 'When the signs of the All-merciful were recited to them, they fell down prostrate, weeping' (19:58), and 'when they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, thou seest their eyes overflow with tears because of the truth they recognize' (5:83).²²

There are also hundreds of ḥadīth featuring crying.²³ In several, the Prophet recommends weeping, especially for fear of God ('No man who weeps for fear of Allah will be touched by the Fire until the milk goes back into the udders'), for fear of hellfire ('If you knew what I know, you would laugh little and weep much'), upon remembering God ('seven will be granted the shade of Allah, [including] a man whose eyes fill up with tears when he remembers Allah in private'), over one's sins ('weep over your sins'), when reading the Qur'ān ('when you recite it, then weep. If you cannot weep then pretend to weep'), before the black stone of the Ka'ba ('this is the place where tears should be shed'), and when entering

²¹ The main studies on weeping in Islam are F. Meier, art. 'Bakkā', *EI²*; Fatemeh Lajevardi and Mukhtar H. Ali, 'Bukā', in Wilferd Madelung and Farhad Daftary (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Islamica* (Consulted online on 30 March 2019, n.d.); William C. Chittick, 'Weeping in classical Sufism' in Kimberley Christine Patton and John Stratton Hawley (eds.), *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 132–44; and Linda G. Jones, "'He cried and made others cry": crying as a sign of pietistic authenticity or deception in medieval Islamic preaching' in Elina Gertsman (ed.), *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History* (London: Routledge, 2013), 102–35; Christopher Melchert, 'Renunciation (*zuhd*) in the early Shi'i tradition' in Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda (eds.), *The Study of Shi'i Islam: History, Theology and Law* (London: I.B. Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2014): 271–94, at 276–9.

²² English translation from Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955).

²³ The English translations and references are from the ḥadīth repository, www.sunnah.com.

the houses of pagans ('Do not enter the ruined dwellings of those who were unjust to themselves unless weeping').²⁴ He advises against extended crying over the deceased ('He who is lamented upon is punished'), but approves it when 'the bereavement is recent'.²⁵ He also describes weeping as 'a mercy which Allah puts in the hearts of his servants', and says 'Allah does not punish for the tears that the eye sheds'.²⁶ The Hadith also describe the Prophet himself crying, notably while hearing the Qur'ān, by the Ka'ba, on a friend's deathbed, when his son Ibrahim died, on his mother's grave, and on his own deathbed.²⁷ Several of Muḥammad's companions are also described as weeping in a variety of situations, notably upon hearing the Qur'ān recited or hearing sermons by the Prophet.²⁸ Abū Bakr in particular was so teary-eyed that his recitation could not be heard during prayer for all the weeping, while 'Umar's crying could be heard from the last rows of worshippers.²⁹

These early sources shaped what we may call the least common denominator view on weeping in Islam, namely that it is commendable to weep provided it is for the right spiritual reasons, chief of which is fear of God. Weeping is considered good because it shows 'softness of the heart', a central Islamic virtue associated with humility and generosity.³⁰ At the same time, the weeping must be sincere to have spiritual value, in concordance with the general Islamic belief that sincere intention (*niyya*) is a prerequisite for all forms of religious worship including prayer. Islamic weeping norms are highly gendered, with women being expected to weep more than men, especially in non-devotional settings.³¹ Still, throughout Islamic history we can read about Muslim men engaging in religious weeping, typically in connection with prayer and Qur'ān recitation, but also in other settings. Weeping has not been a major topic for Islamic scholars—there are only a few works dedicated specifically to

²⁴ (Citations by book:chapter, ḥadīth no. if given.) *Sunan al-Nasa'i* 25:23; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 83:11; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 10:54; *al-Tirmidhī*, 18:10; *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, 1:5, 1337; *Sunan Ibn Majah*, 4:25, 2945; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 60:25.

²⁵ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 11:35; *Sunan Ibn Mājah* 6:1654.

²⁶ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 97:7; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 11:15.

²⁷ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:407; *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, 4:25, 2945; Nawawī, *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn*, 2, 711; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 23:62, 63; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 11:135.

²⁸ Examples proliferate. See, for example, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 9:17. See also Husayn al-'Awaayishah, *Weeping from the Fear of Allaah* (transl. Bint Feroz Din & Bint 'Abd al-Ghafror; Birmingham: Al-Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, 2012), 6–10.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 7; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 96:34.

³⁰ See, for example, al-'Awaayishah, *Weeping from the Fear of Allaah*.

³¹ Dina Greenberg, 'Gendered expressions of grief: an Islamic continuum', *Journal of Society and Religion*, 9 (2007): 1–20.

the topic—but it is addressed in passing in several works. A common concern in classical writings is the classification of weeping into different types.

Beyond the common denominator view, we can discern two quite distinct trends in the Islamic tradition with regard to weeping: one that indulges it and another that advises restraint. This ambiguity may be related to what Paul Heck described as the Neoplatonist and the Stoic trends in classical Islamic thought with regards to emotions more generally.³² The indulgent trend is represented primarily by the early ascetics and their Sufi successors, as well as by the Shi'a. Very early in Islamic history there were ascetics known for their weeping. Some of them are referred to in the sources as 'weepers' (*bakkā'ūn*) due to their very extensive tear-shedding.³³ Incredible stories describe their crying feats: one cried for days on end, another drenched entire sacks of sand, yet another produced a puddle of tears so large he could perform his ablutions in it.³⁴ They cried furrows into their cheeks, lost their eyelashes and eyelids, went blind, or even died from weeping. The early ascetics are described as weeping largely for the same reasons as those mentioned in the ḥadīth: the fear of God and of hellfire, one's own sins and shortcomings, the yearning for heaven, compassion for others, and so on. Similarly with the occasions for weeping: they included prayer, Qur'ān recitation, remembrance of God, sermons or edifying stories, or meditative contemplation. The sources also suggest that the ability to weep was considered a virtue (*faḍīla*) and a sign of true religious fervour, and people expressed frustration at the inability to weep, viewing it as a sign of abandonment by God. The few monographs on weeping from the classical period were written by ascetics, such as Ibn Abī al-Dunyā (d. 894 CE), who wrote *Kitāb al-Riqqa wa-l-bukā'* (*The book of softheartedness and weeping*). Some ascetic and Sufi writings recommend provoked weeping; al-Ghazālī (d. 1111 CE), for example, wrote that 'it is laudable to weep while reading the Qur'ān and if this does not happen spontaneously, one should force oneself to weep. This is possible by way of remembering the threats and warnings in the Qur'ān against the sins and failures of man.

³² Paul L. Heck, 'Sadness in classical Islam: its relation to the goals of religion', 2015, https://www.academia.edu/16663821/Sadness_in_Classical_Islam_Its_Relation_to_the_Goals_of_Religion. (Last accessed 16 November 2019.)

³³ Meier, 'Bakkā'; Lajevardi and Ali, 'Bukā'; Chittick, 'Weeping in classical Sufism'.

³⁴ Meier, 'Bakkā'; Ch. Pellat, 'Seriousness and humour in early Islam (al-jidd wa'l-hazl fi sadr al-islam)', *Islamic Studies*, 2/3 (1963): 353–62.

Should one feel no inclination to weep, then one has full reason to cry over one's lack of grief and tears'.³⁵ The appreciation for weeping continued in many Sufi orders, some of which incorporated weeping in their *dhikr* rituals, a phenomenon still observable today.

Another strain of Islamic thought, represented by the mainstream Sunni tradition, some Sufis, and especially modern-day Salafis, preaches more restraint and discretion with regard to weeping, all the while not denying its benefits. This trend cautions against excessive, ostentatious, or insincere weeping. Some Sufis, for example, considered it to be a sign of weakness to let oneself be overpowered by their feelings to the point of weeping, while others shunned weeping because they wanted their sorrow to last for as long as possible (while the release provided by weeping shortened it). Weeping has been seen by some as a sign of immaturity, noting that Abū Bakr reportedly wept less in his later years. Many writers warn against insincere weeping, often invoking the story of Joseph's brothers who tricked him with fake tears. Others warn against ostentatious weeping, noting the Prophet's hostility to wailing ('He who shaves (his head), shouts and tears his clothing does not belong to us'). A modern book on Islamic manners, for example, notes that 'It is not unmanly to cry, [...] yet it should be done with restraint and not with excessive or loud sounds'.³⁶ This insistence on discretion—which is rooted in a concern that weeping may be instrumentalized to increase social capital—has been central to the modern Salafi critique of Sufi weeping practices.³⁷ As one French Salafi told this author, 'weeping is a private, intimate matter. This thing where you cry during communal prayer and make lots of sounds, it's showing off'.³⁸

This ideal-type distinction should not be taken to mean that Salafis do not weep; they certainly do. For example, the Saudi cleric 'Abdallāh al-Luḥaydān wrote a booklet in 1992 about the benefits of crying while reading the Qur'ān.³⁹ It even concluded with the above-cited observation by al-Ghazālī about the inability to weep itself being a reason to cry.

³⁵ D. C. Mulder, 'The ritual of recitation of the Qur'ān', *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 37 (1983): 247–52.

³⁶ Marwān Ibrāhīm Al-Kaysī, *Morals and Manners in Islam: A Guide to Islamic Ādāb* (Leicester: Kube Publishing, [1986] 2015).

³⁷ For a good illustration of Salafi–Sufi polemics on weeping, see Arif Zamhari, *Rituals of Islamic Spirituality: A Study of Majlis Dhikr Groups in East Java* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010), 41–2 and 113–15.

³⁸ Author's interview with anonymous, Paris, 26 April 2016.

³⁹ 'Abdallāh bin Ibrāhīm al-Luḥaydān, '*al-bukā' 'inda qirā'at al-qur'ān* [Weeping when reading the Qur'ān], 1992 (available at <http://k-tb.com>, last accessed 12 April 2019). This treatise may have been implicitly directed at Shi'i weeping practices.

Leading figures of quietist Salafism such as Muḥammad bin al-ʿUthaymīn are also on the record as weeping while delivering sermons.⁴⁰ However, Salafi weeping is occasional and impromptu, as opposed to the institutionalized, ritualized tear-shedding of Sufis and Shiʿis. When discussing weeping in Islam, it is therefore often useful to distinguish between induced wailing rituals in communal public displays on set occasions and individual efforts to realize and express personal helplessness in fear or hope of God.

There has been little research on weeping in contemporary Muslim societies, except in communities with highly ritualized weeping practices, such as in Sufism and Twelver Shiʿism.⁴¹ Anecdotally, however, it is clear that devotional weeping is widespread also in mainstream Sunni Islam. Many Muslim clerics weep when preaching, and audiences weep with them. Several Muslim political leaders, such as Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, have cried in public when speaking on religious topics.⁴² *Youtube* is full of videos showing preachers and worshippers weeping, and there are websites and Facebook groups dedicated to tear-inducing recitations and hymns.⁴³ However, we lack systematic knowledge of current weeping practices. One study has shown that the Turkish Gülen movement uses ‘weeping sermons’ strategically to persuade followers, but it is unclear how representative it is for Islamist groups more broadly.⁴⁴ As for weeping in militant Islamist groups, it has

⁴⁰ See, for example, ‘bukā’ al-shaykh ibn al-ʿuthaymīn ʿala mawqif azīm min sīrat ʿumar bin al-khaṭṭāb raḍi-allāh ʿanhu [The weeping of shaykh Ibn al-ʿUthaymīn over a great episode from the biography of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yAqZfjpOBg>, 9 January 2014 (last accessed 26 April 2019).

⁴¹ See, for example, Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islām: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of ʿĀshūrāʾ in Twelver Shiʿism* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978); David Pinault, *The Shiites: Ritual and Popular Piety in a Muslim Community* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1992); and Kamran S. Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shiʿi Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2004).

⁴² See, for example, ‘Erdoğan shows his softer side’, *Al-Monitor*, 23 August 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/08/erdogan-cries-television-interview.html>. (Last accessed 16 November 2019).

⁴³ See for example the Facebook group ‘Tears of Recitation’, <https://www.facebook.com/TearsOfRecitation> (last accessed 2 April 2019).

⁴⁴ Thijs Sunier and Mehmet Şahin, ‘The weeping sermon: persuasion, binding and authority within the Gülen-movement’, *Culture and Religion*, 16/2 (3 April 2015): 228–41.

gone entirely unstudied except in some preliminary works by this author.⁴⁵ At the outset, one might expect modern-day jihadis to align more with the restrained position on weeping, given their professed Salafism and declared hostility to Sufism. As we shall see, the reality is quite different.

WHAT JIHADIS SAY ABOUT WEEPING

Although jihadi groups appear not to have produced texts explicitly discussing weeping, there is little doubt that they approve of it, because we see it described and depicted throughout their sources. It features in their magazines, martyrdom biographies, autobiographies, videos, photo montages, and discussions on online forums and social media. It notably features in both propaganda material and defector accounts, suggesting that its reporting is not significantly biased by ideological agendas. There thus appear to be no inhibitions against either engaging in the practice or displaying it to the outside world. Nowhere in the sources—as far as this author can tell—are there prominent criticisms or reservations about devotional weeping (non-devotional weeping is another matter, as we shall see below).

On the contrary, weeping is advertised both within the community and to the outside world. Although solitary weeping occurs, jihadis appear to weep mostly in the presence of fellow fighters. Individuals have no qualms about weeping alone in front of others, and there are many instances of collective weeping. Moreover, weeping is often showcased in propaganda, suggesting a willingness to highlight and broadcast the fact that they cry. There are multiple examples of jihadi propaganda videos and photo montages where the central motif is that of a weeping fighter (see [Figure 1](#) for an example).

In the jihadi sources, weeping is generally cast in a very positive light. Many texts suggest that militant Islamists consider weeping an integral part of being a good *mujāhid*. It is viewed as a signal of piety and hence as an indication that the person is not fighting for pecuniary or other selfish reasons. For example, an Islamic State magazine noted in 2014 that ‘In the recent past, sincere Muslims would weep and pray daily for

⁴⁵ Thomas Hegghammer, ‘Jihadi weeping’ in Sabine Schmidtke (ed.) *Studying the Near and Middle East at the Institute for Advanced Study, 1935-2018* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2018), 505–14; Hegghammer, *Jihadi Culture*, 185–6.



Figure 1: Photo from an Islamic State propaganda release in 2015 showing a fighter weeping⁴⁶

an escape from the lands of *qu'ūd* (abandonment of jihād) to the lands of jihād, even if to live only as a soldier in constant wait for the opportunity to battle'.⁴⁷ This is not to say that all jihadis weep, for not everyone is on the record as weeping, and the sources suggest proneness to weeping is unevenly distributed.⁴⁸ This, however, only increases the value attached to actual weeping. As we have already seen, special epithets are reserved for those in the movement who weep extensively: either *bakkā'* (weeper), *bākī* (one who weeps), or *kathīr al-bukā'* (the plentiful weeper).⁴⁹ A preacher who sheds tears and can make others cry through his sermons can be called *al-bākī al-mubkī*, 'he who weeps and causes weeping'.⁵⁰ A fighter's proneness to weeping can also be lauded in other terms; for

⁴⁶ Twitter message from *as'al allāh al-shahāda* (@VJVJV50), 22 September 2015. (Last accessed 23 September 2015.)

⁴⁷ 'The Fear of Hypocrisy', *Dabiq* 3 (July 2014), 27.

⁴⁸ The sources do not allow us to specify the proportion of active jihadis who weep.

⁴⁹ *Min khafāyā al-amīr* [Secrets of the emir], <http://www.altawhed.eb2a.com/vb/archive/index.php/t-1533.html>, posted 16 February 2013 (last accessed 21 April 2015).

⁵⁰ *Wa- 'ayn bakat min kbāshyat allāh* [An eye wept for fear of God], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHQ19lz0d_o, posted 19 August 2013 (last accessed 28 March 2019). The description of the video starts with the phrase '*al-shaykh al-bākī al-mubkī ibrahīm al-jibrīn yabkī wa-yubkī kul man khalafahu*'.

example, the leader of the cell behind the 2004 Madrid attack, Abdelmajid al-Fakhet, was said to speak with ‘much emotion and enthusiasm’, and he ‘could even cry of emotion’.⁵¹ Crucially, tearfulness by no means detracts from the fighter’s reputation for ferocity or bravery; as with Abū Muṣ‘ab al-Zarqāwī, some of the most brutal fighters have been lauded for their weeping. Even the infamous Islamic State executioner ‘Jihadi John’ was described in *Dabiq* magazine as someone who wept, as we shall see below. If anything, weeping features in jihadi biographies as a *correlate* of brutality. This pattern is consistent with broader Sunni jihadi messaging—rooted in the Qur’ān (e.g., 5:54, 48:29, 9:73)—about the ideal Muslim in war situations being merciful (*rahīm*) toward fellow Muslims and harsh (*ghalīz*) with the disbelievers.

Meanwhile, less frequent weepers express envy at their more tearful comrades and make efforts to cry more. For example, Khaled al-Berry, a member of the Egyptian Islamic Group in the 1980s, complained,

An acquaintance of mine [...] had changed to a startling degree recently [...] Suddenly, this young man started fasting every day and when he came to the prayer, he had only to hear the Qur’an to start weeping loudly, on one note, like a long cry of pain. I felt that the sound was sincere and contained a suppressed complaint and I felt that it contained something that I lacked. I wanted that sound. I wanted it to come out of me, for if it did so, it would relieve me of many things.⁵²

The fact that only a minority of jihadis weep, and that others readily admit their inability to do so, suggests that they value sincerity in matters tearful, and that they disapprove of fake weeping. That being said, the available sources do not allow us to gauge the sincerity of those who do weep.

The jihadi appreciation for tears is selective and only applies to devotional weeping. The crying must in some way testify to the person’s faith or commitment to the cause in order to merit reporting and praise. Weeping for more mundane reasons, such as hurting one’s leg or missing one’s mother, is devalued, although it is mostly simply ignored in the sources, not explicitly denounced. That being said, jihadis often mock enemies who weep from fear or sorrow, suggesting that they consider such weeping unmanly and perhaps even un-Islamic. For example, in 2015, jihadi Twitter users shared a YouTube video titled ‘US soldier crying for their life in the battle of Falluja’, which invited sarcastic comments by sympathizers.⁵³ On another occasion, Islamic

⁵¹ Petter Nesser, *Islamist Terrorism in Europe: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 144.

⁵² Khaled al-Berry, *Life Is More Beautiful Than Paradise: A Jihadist’s Own Story* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2009), 118.

⁵³ Twitter message from ‘Berita Dunia’ (@muslimurl), 15 September 2015. (Last accessed 17 September 2015.)

State sympathizers mocked a young man from a rival group caught on camera weeping from fear right before executing a suicide operation.⁵⁴ Similarly in 2015, at the time when Islamic State executed suspected homosexuals by throwing them off tall buildings, a female sympathizer posted a picture of one of the victims on Twitter, adding the comment ‘hahaha poor baby—want a tissue before you go skydiving?’⁵⁵ Such messages are part of a broader discursive theme in jihadi propaganda that casts enemies as cowards and fearful of death. Weeping thus has a dual significance: it shows the strength of the *mujāhidīn* and the weakness of the infidels. But in what specific types of situations do jihadis weep?

WHEN JIHADIS WEEP

The sources depict jihadis weeping in many different situations. My review of the sources suggests that most weeping reports sort into one of six main types of weeping occasions.⁵⁶ In the following I shall illustrate each type with representative examples.

Prayer

One important weeping occasion is during prayer, where the recitation of the Qur’ān is often described as triggering tears. For example, in a biography of ‘Abdallāh ‘Azzām, the leader of the so-called Afghan Arabs in the 1980s, we learn that

he used to weep during the evening and afternoon prayers. If he found a brother with a good recitation, he would put him at the front in prayer, and say, ‘I want to hear from you’. By God, there was not a single time he did not weep. Sometimes I prayed behind him and he wept and I wept: It was always like this, praise be to God.⁵⁷

Similarly, here is an al-Qaida recruit describing Friday prayer in a training camp in late 1990s Afghanistan:

⁵⁴ ‘Reluctant teenage jihadi cries before suicide mission!’, *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=14&v=OCGgv5AvEnk> (last accessed 24 September 2015).

⁵⁵ Twitter message from ‘alwalawalbara’ (@alwalawalbara12), 24 October 2016. (Last accessed 25 October 2015.)

⁵⁶ This is a tentative, inductively generated typology which may need to be revised as research on this topic progresses.

⁵⁷ Husnī Adham Jarār, *al-Shabīd ‘abdallāh ‘azzām: rajul da’wa wa-madrasat jihād* [The Martyr ‘Abdallāh ‘Azzām: man of the mission to spread Islam and a school of jihad] (Amman: Dār al-Ḍiyā’, 1990), 353–4.

The al-Jum‘a prayer was always the most intense of the week [...] sometimes, a brother would be so overcome by faith that tears would well up in his eyes. I was overcome too. Standing amidst these mujahidin, I could feel the spirit of God fill me completely. I was swept up as the others by the feelings of love and fellowship and brotherhood. I was part of a community, a community of complete devotion to God.⁵⁸

In another text, Omar Hammami, an American of half-Syrian extraction who joined the al-Shabaab militia in Somalia in the late 2000s, described a particularly brutal instructor in one of the training camps. ‘Despite his tough appearance’, Hammami noted, ‘he used to cry in the prayers when he heard the verses of the Qur‘ān recited’.⁵⁹

Sermons

Another frequent occasion for weeping is sermons and speeches. Sermon-related weeping can be further divided into two types: when the speaker weeps and when the audience weeps. One can happen without the other, and both can happen simultaneously.

Examples of weeping preachers abound. One Afghan Arab recalls hearing the abovementioned ‘Azzām ‘giving a sermon while crying heavily’ at the Badr camp outside Peshawar in 1984.⁶⁰ A video from 1990s Kurdistan shows the now-famous Mulla Krekar weeping mid-sermon, and when his crying starts, the camera moves to the audience to show many of them also sobbing.⁶¹ In another video from the 2000s, we can see the Boko Haram leader Mamman Nur break down in tears while giving a sermon on jihad, to chants of ‘*allāhu akbar*’ from the audience.⁶² Similarly, a video from Syria in 2013 shows the militant leader Saqr al-Jihād weeping while exhorting his followers to wage jihad and seek martyrdom.⁶³ It is not only prominent leaders and ideologues who weep while speaking; there are several examples of platoon commanders

⁵⁸ Omar Nasiri, *Inside the Jihad: My Life with al-Qaeda: a Spy's story* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 151.

⁵⁹ Abu Mansuur Al-Amriiki [sic], ‘The Story of an American Jihaadi [sic]—Part One’, 2012 (available at Jihadology.net), 56.

⁶⁰ Bāsil Muḥammad, *Ṣafaḥāt min sijill al-anṣār al-‘arab fī afghānistān* [The Arab Supporters in Afghanistan] (Riyadh: Lajnat al-Birr al-Islāmiyya, 1991), 101.

⁶¹ ‘Mamosta Krekar Mrdeny Pexambary xwa 2’, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnMIwGg3nA4> published 3 September 2010, from ca. 1’00”. (Last accessed 30 March 2019).

⁶² Twitter message from Bokostan (@BokoWatch), 8 January 2019.

⁶³ ‘In Tearful Display, Saudi Jihadi Sheikh Fighting In Syria Prays For Martyrdom And Slaughter, Says: We Will Conquer Syria, Then Palestine’, *MEMRI Special Dispatch*, no. 5560 (10 December 2013).

weeping while giving pep talks in the field or of footsoldiers weeping in video statements. For example, in 2015 the Norwegian-Swedish foreign fighter Michael Skråmo recorded a video-taped message from Kobane in Syria directed at friends and sympathizers at home.⁶⁴ A few minutes into the film he breaks down crying while talking about the religious experiences he is having and would like his friends to partake in.

Weeping audiences also abound. One source described a sermon by ‘Azzām in the 1980s: ‘his speech inflamed all those around him with enthusiasm. Next to me, there was a young Afghan man whose eyes were in tears’.⁶⁵ One former Afghan Arab recalled that ‘Azzām ‘used to come from Islamabad to Peshawar and make us weep on Thursdays and Fridays’.⁶⁶ Similar examples feature in more recent sources too. For example, in a video from Syria in 2013, we see the Saudi jihadi sheikh ‘Abdallāh al-Muḥaysinī give a pre-battle speech, and one of the men next to him, believed to be commander Sayfullāh al-Shīshānī, tears up at the end of the speech.⁶⁷ In another video from Gaza around 2014, the Salafi shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Mūsā (aka Abū Nūr al-Maqdisī) gives a speech in a mosque, and some 25 minutes into it, one of the guards is so overcome with emotion that he starts crying.⁶⁸

Anāshīd-listening

Another weeping occasion is while listening to *anāshīd*, religious *a cappella* hymns. *Anāshīd* have been very popular among militant Islamists since the 1980s, and this appreciation spurred the rise of a veritable industry of jihadi *anāshīd* which by the 2010s had generated over a thousand different tunes. *Anāshīd* feature in practically all their audio-visual propaganda products, and they are sung and listened to extensively inside the groups, for example when members train, drive cars, or relax in their safe houses.⁶⁹ A number of sources depict weeping in connection with *anāshīd*-listening. For example, a video from Islamic State-controlled Syria around 2015 showed a Tunisian singer (*munshid*) chanting a lyrical hymn to a room full of men, perhaps some forty of

⁶⁴ ‘Abo Ibrahim Al Swedi - Nār Kommer Tilliten’, <https://vimeo.com/118355704>, posted ca. April 2015 (last accessed 14 April 2016), from 4’30”.

⁶⁵ Ayman Ṣabrī Farāj, *Dhikrayāt ‘arabī afghānī: Abū Ja‘far al-Miṣrī al-Qandahārī [Memoirs of an Afghan Arab]* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2002), 241.

⁶⁶ *Al-Bunyān al-Marsūs*, 30 (February 1990), 7.

⁶⁷ Untitled video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REf5L_Y1IK8, undated (last accessed 18 April 2015).

⁶⁸ Untitled video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXmokZu3ro4>, undated (last accessed 18 April 2015).

⁶⁹ See, for example, Hegghammer, *Jihadi Culture*, chs. 3, 4, and 8.

them.⁷⁰ Four or five of them break into tears at successive points during the session; meanwhile the camera scans the room and zooms in on some of the crying men.

Pre- and post-combat

Another, intriguing type of weeping situation arises in connection with combat. Weeping rarely happens in the heat of battle, but there are numerous examples of people crying right before or right afterward, and typically the weeping is described as relating to expectations of martyrdom. Pre-combat weeping happens in anticipation of martyrdom, while post-combat weeping expresses disappointment at denial of martyrdom (that is, at having survived). We find an example of anticipatory weeping in this account from an Arab fighting in early 1990s Bosnia:

One of the brothers told me that he stayed up at night, weeping bitterly and praying to God to grant him martyrdom in the coming operation. [...] On the night prior to the operation he led us in prayer at night and I swear that he made us cry by the way he supplicated God for victory and implored him constantly to grant him martyrdom.⁷¹

Others weep when they are denied, for whatever reason, the opportunity to take part in battle. For example, in 1986, an overweight Afghan Arab fighter named Tamīm al-ʿAdnānī wept when he was not allowed to enter the battle of Jaji:

I asked Osama bin Laden to let me fight with them and participate in the operations, but he refused and told me ‘you are fat and you cannot’. I begged him and he told me ‘obeying the leader is obligatory’. [...] Then I woke up and heard Osama bin Laden say, ‘Let us get out of here. Complete retreat’. I cried and cried.⁷²

Another Afghan Arab wept because he was late to a battle, prompting ʿAzzām to remark that ‘I was so pleased to see a mujahid who had spent seven years in battle weep because he was late to a jihad operation’.⁷³ However, post-combat weeping appears to be more common; the

⁷⁰ Untitled video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qEdhE_uwcs, undated (last accessed 18 April 2015).

⁷¹ Abū al-Shaqrāʾ al-Hindūkūshī, *ʿMudhakirātī min kābūl ilā baġhdādʿ*, 2007, <http://archive.org/details/fromcaboltobagdad>, part 6. (Last accessed 2 November 2012.)

⁷² Muḥammad, *al-Anṣār al-ʿarab*, 314.

⁷³ Abdallāh ʿAzzām, *ʿIbar wa-baṣāʿir liʿl-jihād fiʿl-ʿasr al-ḥādīr* [Lessons and Insights on Jihad in the Current Age] (Amman: Maktabat al-Risāla al-Ḥadītha, 2nd edn., 1987), 20.

sources contain many descriptions of fighters weeping out of disappointment at not having been killed in battle. For example, when the Yemeni fighter Nāṣir al-Baḥrī had to return to base to recover from an injury during a battle in Bosnia, he ‘started weeping. I felt that in the middle of the war there was no use for me’.⁷⁴

Suffering of the umma

Yet another common occasion for weeping is when people are exposed to stories or images of Muslim civilians suffering at the hands of Islam’s enemies. Usāma bin Lādin once cried in an al-Jazeera interview, which led the jihadi website Azzam.com to write an article titled ‘Usama bin Laden cried over the hopeless condition of today’s Muslim rulers’.⁷⁵ The abovementioned Tamīm al-‘Adnānī was described as follows by one of his comrades: ‘If I ever spoke to him about the tragedies of the Muslims, it was as if those tragedies were happening to him. He would cry much, and was very soft-hearted, emotional and sentimental’.⁷⁶ A Saudi fighter in late 1990s Afghanistan named Abū al-Zubayr al-Kabīlī was known for collapsing in tears ‘whenever he heard of a calamity affecting the Muslim nation or a tragic story that had occurred in Bosnia’.⁷⁷ A British-Algerian named Rahman Benouis, who was convicted on terrorism charges in the UK in 2007, explained in court that his militant career had started after someone showed him a video of atrocities against Muslims in Kashmir which had made him weep.⁷⁸ We know such reports are real, because fighters have been observed doing this during trials; for example, Ishaq Ahmed, a Norwegian-Somali foreign fighter returned from Syria, wept in court in 2015 when describing an anecdote about a young girl who was raped by government soldiers, a story that he said had motivated him to go to Syria in the first place.⁷⁹ Another interesting anecdote features in the martyrdom biography of the British Islamic State executioner Mohammed Emwazi—also known as ‘Jihadi

⁷⁴ Nasser al-Bahri and Georges Malbrunot, *Dans l’ombre de Ben Laden: Révélations de son garde du corps repentant* [In the shade of Bin Laden: revelations from his repentant bodyguard] (Neully-sur-Seine: Michel Lafon, 2010), 98.

⁷⁵ ‘Usama bin Laden cried over the hopeless condition of today’s Muslim rulers’, *Azzam.com*, 30 December 2001. (Last accessed 31 December 2001).

⁷⁶ ‘Abdallāh ‘Azzām, *The Lofty Mountain* (London: Azzam Publications, 2003), p. 49.

⁷⁷ al-Hindūkūshī, ‘*Mudhakirātī min kābūl ilā baḡhdād*, part 5.

⁷⁸ ‘Profile: Anthony Garcia’, *BBC News (online)*, 30 April 2007.

⁷⁹ Twitter message by Kadafi Zaman (@TV2Kadafi), 22 June 2015; Author’s SMS correspondence with Kadafi Zaman, 22 June 2015.

John'. It describes him quarreling with a quietist Salafi in a mosque in Britain over the Palestinian issue, and then weeping:

In one of the [mosques] in the land of kufr, the [non-jihadi salafi] remarked regarding the abuses of the spiteful Jews against our sisters in Palestine that the women 'deserved it'. Abu Muharib [Jihadi John] had to be restrained from hitting this madkhali by other worshippers. [Then] Abu Muharib began to weep loudly. I watched him in his prayer weeping in [prostration] as if he had lost a loved one.⁸⁰

Lost comrades

Speaking of losing a loved one, the sixth main type of weeping occasion is when a fellow fighter dies. In theory, such situations pose a dilemma because the Islamic tradition offers contradictory norms with regard to weeping over the deceased. On the one hand, one is not supposed to grieve for martyrs, but rather express joy at their death, because they have entered the highest levels of paradise.⁸¹ This is why Muḥammad 'Aṭā, one of the 9/11 hijackers, wrote in his will that 'I don't want anyone to weep and cry or to rip their clothes or slap their faces because this is an ignorant thing to do'.⁸² On the other hand, weeping over a lost friend or relative is considered acceptable, especially right after the fact (as we saw earlier in the article, the Prophet only advised against extended lamentation or excessive wailing).

In some instances, jihadis solve the dilemma by weeping and celebrating on the same occasion. For example, 'Abdallāh 'Azzām once described a post-battle scene in 1980s Afghanistan as follows: 'I heard the news while we were in the battle that Aḥmad was killed. The Ta'if brothers burst into tears because they knew him since he was young. The youths started to congratulate each other because of his martyrdom and they wished to be in his place'.⁸³

Mostly, however, there is only weeping, suggesting that the jihadi norm is to let people weep freely over fallen comrades. In late 1980s Afghanistan, *al-Jihād* magazine described Usāma bin Lādin's grief over a dear friend: '[Abū Qutayba] was [Bin Ladin's] right hand who loved him

⁸⁰ 'Among the believers are men: Abu Muharib al-Muhajir', *Dabiq*, 13 (February 2016), 23.

⁸¹ David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 18.

⁸² 'Mohamed Atta's last will and testament', available at <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/network/personal/attawill.html>, undated (last accessed 29 March 2019).

⁸³ Muḥammad, *al-Anṣār al-'arab*, 278.

like the spring [...] a tank rocket killed three brothers, including Abū Qutayba. It slashed them in pieces. And [Bin Ladin] was talking and suddenly when he came to talk about Abū Qutayba, his throat became dry and his eyes became wet'.⁸⁴ Similarly, when the abovementioned Tamīm al-ʿAdnānī died in 1989, ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām wrote, 'By Allah, we have never met anyone like you before, nor have I ever cried over a person the way I cried over you'.⁸⁵ These accounts suggest that in the case of weeping for the dead, it is acceptable to let the personal relationship with the deceased—as opposed to one's relationship with God—calibrate the intensity of the weeping. Some jihadi leaders, however, have wept over fallen fighters as a matter of routine, regardless of their prior connection. ʿAbdallāh ʿAzzām used to do this with Arabs killed in the 1980s in Afghanistan:

And his tears fell when he lauded the martyrs after their burial. He would stand on the grave of each martyr and say a few enflamed words full of enthusiasm and compassion, and it was almost never without tears. We saw them as a mark of distinction falling on his beard, like drops of dew fall on twigs. We saw his beard wet with tears.⁸⁶

Sometimes the weeping over lost comrades happens long after the fact. For example, in 2014, the Egyptian jihadi preacher Abu Hamza al-Masri wept in a US court after speaking about his love for Usāma bin Lādin, who had been killed three years earlier.⁸⁷

The six types of weeping occasions described here do not capture all cases of weeping found in the sources. Some reports defy categorization because we lack information about the precise reason for the weeping. For example, in the following description from Afghanistan, it is not clear whether the weeping reflects sorrow for the fallen martyrs or awe at a perceived miracle, or both: 'When Uncle Ishaq and Brother Muhammad got martyred in an American Drone strike in January 2015, an amazing fragrance was coming out of uncle's body spreading all over the area. Many people wept involuntarily after observing this

⁸⁴ Peter L. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of al Qaeda's Leader* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 87.

⁸⁵ ʿAzzām, *The Lofty Mountain*, 64.

⁸⁶ Maḥmūd Saʿīd ʿAzzām, *al-Duktūr al-shahīd ʿabdallāh yūsuf ʿazzām: shaykhī alladhī ʿaraftu* [The Martyred Doctor ʿAbdallāh Yūsuf ʿAzzām: The Shaykh That I Knew] (Mu'assasat Ibdā' li'l-Abḥath wa-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Tadrīb, 2012), 200.

⁸⁷ Robin De Peyer, 'Radical Cleric Abu Hamza weeps in court after telling of his love for Osama Bin Laden', *Evening Standard*, 9 May 2014.

spiritual spectrum'.⁸⁸ A similarly ambiguous situation features in the autobiography of Muṣṭafā Bādī, who was a young Yemeni footsoldier in the 1980s Afghanistan war. He recalls lying sick with malaria when two senior leaders, 'Abdallāh 'Azzām and 'Abd Rabb al-Rasūl Sayyāf, paid him a surprise visit:

I loved this Palestinian sheikh and I could not find anything to say to express my love for him as I lay on the bed in a very bad condition. I said to myself, 'what can I present to this sheikh to express my love and appreciation for him?' When he came close to my bed, I grasped his hand hard to pull myself up. [...] He put his hand on mine and said, 'don't worry, no need to get up'. I said, 'but I would like to get up a little'. I searched with my hand under the bed, took out my rifle and told him, 'Sheikh I don't have anything to offer you other than this weapon which is very dear to me; I took it as booty from one of the Russian soldiers. I would like you to have it'. It was an emotional, wonderful moment and the sheikh could not hold himself together. He wept and we wept with him, and Sayyāf too. Even the Afghan patients who did not understand Arabic were taken by the moment.⁸⁹

Here it is not clear whether we are dealing with an instance of ordinary intra-human affection or something more spiritual. Examples like these show that jihadi weeping practices are complex and highly context-sensitive, and that more research is needed to grasp their nuances.

Lesser reasons

It should be clear from the evidence reviewed thus far that most weeping accounts depict religiously appropriate or 'noble' weeping and are presented to cast the involved parties in a good light. When the situation is ambiguous, they may add a clarification, as did the militant who wept while being tortured by Pakistani police and later wrote: 'I did not weep because of the violence [of the infidels], but I wept because of the sweetness of *iman*'.⁹⁰

It would be naïve, however, to assume that militants do not also cry for 'lesser reasons' at odds with their norms and ideology. However, in the absence of fly-on-the-wall sources it is difficult to know, for example, how many jihadis cry alone because they feel homesick or suffer unrequited love.

⁸⁸ 'Americans neither killed the 'jew' Warren Weinstein nor the 'atheist' Giovanni Lo Porto!' <http://justpaste.it/lttc>, undated (last accessed 21 June 2015).

⁸⁹ Muṣṭafā Bādī, *Afghanistan: iḥtilāl al-dhākira* [Afghanistan: Overtaking the Memory] (Sanaa: Unknown publisher, 2004), 113.

⁹⁰ Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam*, 180.

We get glimpses of unsanctioned weeping in the sources. For example, a Chechen Islamic State fighter in Syria described weeping alone in a state of mind suggestive of sorrow or depression:

the next thing you know that friend is killed, and ‘you’re in shock’. It’s only when you get back home and you’re alone, that’s when they come [...]. ‘All of the brothers, they come and they get inside your head and they start smiling at you. And however hard you try they won’t go away, until they bring you to tears’.⁹¹

Others have wept from fear: in 2015 a young Uzbek suicide bomber in Syria was captured on camera moments before the operation, crying and shivering from fear.⁹² Yet others have become emotional when parting with family; a Norwegian convert who tried to go to Syria in 2015 to join Islamic State and later said he had fought back tears when saying goodbye to his mother.⁹³

Overall, however, most of the reported jihadi weeping reflects spiritual experiences, and it largely conforms to existing Islamic norms about weeping, such as the expectation to cry primarily for fear of God. The closest thing to a jihadism-specific weeping occasion is the combat-related one, where fighters cry in anticipation of martyrdom or over the denial thereof (although even this is not historically unprecedented, as we shall see below.) However, it is clear that, in the Islamic thought landscape on weeping, the jihadis are closer to the ‘indulgent’ trend than to the restrained one. This is counterintuitive, because it puts them closer to the Sufis than the Salafis in the weeping domain, even though jihadis usually express hostility to Sufis on account of the latter’s unorthodox practices. At the same time, jihadis appear to draw a line at the highly ritualized weeping of the kind found in Shi‘ism and some Sufi communities.

⁹¹ Joanna Paraszczuk, ‘Dear Musa: how to live when my friends are martyred?’, *Radio Free Europe online*, 20 May 2015. (Last accessed 16 November 2019.)

⁹² ‘Young jihadi bursts in tears moments before Syria suicide attack in ‘promo’ clip (VIDEO)’, *Russia Today (online)*, 24 September 2015. (Last accessed 16 November 2019.)

⁹³ ‘Tiltalt konvertitt (19) om siste møte med moren: Fryktet gråt ville avsløre ham [Accused convert (19) about last meeting with mother: worried that crying would alert her]’, *Verdens Gang (online)*, 3 November 2016. (Last accessed 16 November 2019.)

WHY SO EMOTIONAL

It is beyond the scope of this article to offer a robust answer to why jihadis have proved willing to emulate their Sufi archenemies in this particular domain, but we can nevertheless entertain some tentative explanations, if only to sow ideas for future research.

Functionalist explanations

One approach to the puzzle is to view the embrace of weeping as a doctrinal concession of sorts, which leads to the proposition that the weeping provides some kind of benefit that the jihadi movement has found valuable. Given what the social sciences have uncovered about the functions of weeping, we can think of at least three non-mutually exclusive ways in which a weeping culture can benefit militant groups.

One is that weeping provides emotional release that helps individuals cope with the extreme psychological strain of life in the militant underground. Most jihadi groups expose their members to the horrors of war and a constant risk of death, injury, or capture. We know from other research on the internal culture of jihadi groups that these pressures make emotions run high.⁹⁴ We also know that weeping is found to a larger or smaller extent in most military organizations.

Another possibility is that the attachment-inducing effect of weeping has helped jihadi groups build morale and cohesion. Weeping is believed to strengthen interpersonal attachment and trust, in part because it involves showing vulnerability, thereby constituting what social scientists call a ‘costly sign’. As we have seen, much of the jihadi crying is a social activity, not infrequently with a contagious effect. It is possible that a weeping culture has group-level benefits that jihadis have found strategically important.

A third speculation is that weeping constitutes a form of virtue signaling that helps communicate commitment to the cause both within the community and to external audiences. As noted earlier, weeping is associated with sincerity, because it is relatively hard (though not impossible) to fake. Given the association between weeping and fear of God in the Islamic tradition, religious weeping is frequently interpreted as a sign of genuine faith and commitment. At least two studies of Islamic preaching have suggested that weeping preachers command more authority and credibility over their audiences.⁹⁵ Given their clandestine nature, jihadi

⁹⁴ Hegghammer, *Jihadi culture*, 78.

⁹⁵ Jones, “‘He Cried and Made Others Cry’”; Sunier and Şahin, ‘The weeping sermon’.

groups may have a particular need to ensure that their members are highly committed (lest they attract opportunists and infiltrators), and weeping may provide useful information in this regard. Jihadi groups presumably also have an incentive to appear sincere in their beliefs to outside Muslim constituencies in order to attract the latter's support. This may be why jihadis are so keen to showcase the weeping that happens within their ranks. In any case, all of these functionalist hypotheses are speculative and too simplistic to account fully for the existence of a jihadi weeping culture, much less the precise forms it takes.

A deeper tradition?

Another approach to the puzzle consists of viewing jihadi weeping not as a rupture from Salafism, but as a continuation of another pre-existing phenomenon, namely the old connection in the Islamic tradition between asceticism and military jihad.

Modern jihadis are not the first jihad-waging Muslims to cry in the trenches. A closer look at Islamic history reveals many examples of *mujāhidīn* who have wept in connection with warfare. A famous early example is Khālid b. al-Walīd (d. 642)—one of the principal commanders of the first Muslim conquests and a paragon of military virtue—who wept on his deathbed upon realizing that he would not die on the battlefield. Less well known are the many cases of fighter-ascetics in the medieval period who were known for their weeping. The most prominent example is ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak (d. 797) one of the ascetic volunteers who fought against the Byzantines in north Syria during the early ʿAbbasid period, and the author of the first known book on jihad in the Islamic tradition. Ibn al-Mubārak is described in several sources as a frequent shedder of tears. One of his companions later said,

We were then on a leg of our journey on the Syrian road, having our supper at night in a house, when the lamp went out. One of our group stood up, took the lamp, and went out to light it. He stayed outside for a while, and then brought the lamp back. Then I looked at Ibn al-Mubarak's face, and his beard was wet from his tears. I then said to myself, this is why this man's merit is superior to ours. While the lamp was gone, he was probably sitting in the dark, recalling the Judgment Day.⁹⁶

Another anecdote tells of Ibn al-Mubārak fighting against an unbeliever but becoming tempted to attack the enemy while the latter was praying to his gods, despite having promised to let him perform

⁹⁶ Michael Bonner, 'Some observations concerning the early development of jihad on the Arab-Byzantine frontier', *Studia Islamica*, 75 (1992): 5–31, at 27.

his rituals first. As he was about to strike, he heard a voice reminding him of his promise, whereupon he began to weep. Asked by his opponent why he was crying, Ibn al-Mubārak said ‘On your behalf I have been chastised’, whereupon the unbeliever was impressed by Islam and converted.⁹⁷ Similarly, in his book on jihad in premodern Sufi writings, Harry Neale mentions several examples from the Persian book *Hazār hikāyat- i šūfiyān* (The Thousand Tales of the Sufis) of Sufi warriors in the medieval period who weep in connection with battle. He cites a certain Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī who describes meeting a *murīd* (acolyte) in Tarsus who had just returned from a battle in which four of his companions had died, and the *murīd* was weeping ‘for he had also hoped to be among the martyrs that day’.⁹⁸ Another fighter returned from battle victorious, having slain many unbelievers and seized ample spoils, but wept because he ‘remained the prisoner of his passions’ and thus his jihad was incomplete because he had not overcome his lower self.⁹⁹

The association between weeping and jihad thus has deep roots. It is not irrelevant here that many famous Muslim generals are on the record as weeping. Salāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (d. 1193) wept on several occasions, Timūr (d. 1405) wept for fear that his conquests might not please God, the Ottoman conqueror Selim the Resolute (d. 1520) wept upon entering Damascus and seeing Ibn ‘Arabī’s grave, the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb (d. 1707) wept on hearing poetry, and the West African commander al-Ḥājj ‘Umar Tāl (d. 1864) wept also for fear that his conquests might not please God.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, classical treatises on military jihad, such as Ibn al-Naḥḥās al-Dumyātī’s (d. 1411) *Book of Jihad*, treats devotional weeping in connection with war as something natural.¹⁰¹ We may also note that modern Islamic books on weeping cite ḥadīth which juxtapose

⁹⁷ Harry S. Neale, *Jihad in Premodern Sufi Writings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 139.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 104, 140–1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 106, 143.

¹⁰⁰ Malcolm Cameron Lyons and D. E. P. Jackson, *Saladin: The Politics of the Holy War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 373; Ahmed Ibn Arabshah, *Tamerlane or Timur the Great Amir* (transl. J. H. Sanders; London: Luzac, 1936), 317; John W. Kiser, *Commander of the Faithful: The Life and Times of Emir Abd el-Kader (1808–1883)* (Rhinebeck, NY: Monkfish Book Publishing, 2008), 286; Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 327; John Ralph Willis, *In the Path of Allah: The Passion of al-Hajj ‘Umar. An Essay into the Nature of Charisma in Islam* (London: Frank Cass, 1989), 128.

¹⁰¹ Ibn al-Naḥḥās, *Mashārī’ al-ashwāq ilā maṣārī’ al-‘ushshāq wa-muthīr al-gharām alā Dār al-Salām: fī faḍā’il al-jihād* (eds. Idrīs M. ‘Alī and Muḥammad Khālīd Istanbūlī; Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmiyya, 3rd edn., 2002).

weeping and jihad as specially beneficial activities ('No man who weeps for fear of Allah will be touched by the Fire until the milk goes back into the udders. And the dust (of jihad) in the cause of Allah and the smoke of Hell, will never be combined in the nostrils of a Muslim').¹⁰²

There is some evidence that modern jihadis see themselves as continuing in the tradition of the early fighter-ascetics. In their propaganda they sometimes invoke Ibn al-Mubārak as a model *mujāhid* to be emulated. For example, in October 2009, the group named Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan released a video titled *faḍl al-jihād* (The Benefit of Jihad) in which they presented themselves as the descendants of Ibn al-Mubārak.¹⁰³ Moreover, in the mid-2010s, the Syria-based al-Qaida-linked group Jabhat al-Nuṣra ran a religious school named 'the Imām 'Abdallāh bin al-Mubārak Institute for the Study of Sharī'a Sciences'.¹⁰⁴ It is not clear to what extent modern jihadis are inspired by Ibn al-Mubārak's weeping specifically, but they have almost certainly been aware of it, because the movement is generally very interested in early Islamic history.

CONCLUSION

This article has presented the first in-depth look at weeping in modern jihadi groups. It revealed that crying is widespread and encouraged inside the movement. The appreciation is confined to weeping for spiritual reasons and reflects mainstream Islamic norms that approve of devotional tears. The weeping occurs in a variety of situations ranging from prayer to combat situations to the consumption of music and videos. Jihadi crying has an important social dimension in that it is usually performed in groups and can raise the in-group status of those who do it more. Jihadis also take pride in their weeping and display it to outside audiences through propaganda products. The social aspect of jihadi weeping suggests that it is, among other things, a way to signal piety within the group and to the outside world. The weeping may serve other functions, such as collective morale-building and individual stress regulation, but it is too early to draw settled conclusions about what the weeping does for the jihadi movement.

¹⁰² al-Awaayishah, *Weeping from the Fear of Allaah*, 3.

¹⁰³ 'Jundullah – Fadl al-Jihad', <https://archive.org/details/Jundullah-FadlAlJihad>, uploaded 12 June 2013 (last accessed 5 October 2019).

¹⁰⁴ Aaron Zelin, 'New video message from Jabhat al-Nusra: 'Report on the Imam Abdallah bin al-Mubarak Institute for the Study of Sharia Sciences'', *Jihadology.net*, 9 December 2015. (Last accessed 21 May 2019.)

The identification of a weeping culture in modern jihadi groups is significant for several reasons. For one, it deepens our understanding of the mindset and worldview of militant Islamists, an ideological community whose violence and resilience have often baffled observers. At the individual level, the weeping tells us something about the intensity of the emotional commitment to the cause among Islamist militants. Although we cannot be sure that all the weeping is sincere, crying is relatively hard to fake, and it seems doubtful that weeping on this scale could occur among loosely committed activists. This suggests that the religiosity of many jihadis is genuine and that they cannot be dismissed as delinquent opportunists hiding under a veneer of piety.

At the group level, the weeping indicates that life in the jihadi underground is considerably more sentimental than its tabloid reputation suggests. Beheading videos and other staged acts of violence create the impression of jihadi groups as soulless and sombre dens of hypermasculinity, but the reality is quite different. As we have seen, the internal culture of groups like al-Qaida and Islamic State encourages male displays of emotion and affection, including uncontrolled weeping. The finding corroborates other recent research into daily life on the inside of jihadi groups. A previous book edited by this author documented the existence of a rich 'jihadi culture' in which things like poetry, music, iconography, and dream interpretation play central roles.¹⁰⁵ Jihadi culture involves a wide range of emotion-arousing rituals and practices, of which weeping is one. In fact, militant Islamists appear to have an unusually sentimental internal culture even when compared with other violent non-state groups. This is significant because it may help explain why people join and stay in groups like Islamic State, why their members are willing to take extreme risks, and why the jihadi movement has been so resilient in the face of severe countermeasures. Put simply, life in the jihadi underground may provide emotional rewards and incentives that existing models of individual decision-making have not sufficiently taken into account.

The study of weeping and jihadi culture also enriches the broader literature on emotions in social movements by bringing examples from a non-Western cultural context and shedding light on religious emotions in militant groups. As noted earlier, the social sciences and humanities took an 'affective turn' in the 1990s, devoting more attention to the role of emotions—as opposed to material cost-benefit calculations—in human decision-making. This perspective was also applied to the study of social movements and non-state actors, notably in the work of sociologists such as Jeff Goodwin, James Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, who

¹⁰⁵ Hegghammer, *Jihadi Culture*.

provided deep insights into the role of emotions in high-risk collective action.¹⁰⁶ However, this literature has drawn primarily on case studies of groups and movements that 1) operated in the West, 2) were not very violent, and 3) were not religious. The research on weeping and jihadi culture thus far largely confirms the centrality of emotional motivations and emotion-inducing practices in mobilization, but also suggests religious emotions may operate somewhat differently from other types of emotion. For example, they may be less contagious to out-groups, but all the more intense within the in-group. They may also be more conducive to extreme risk-taking, since they produce attachment to ideas of after-life rewards. The findings on jihadi weeping thus call for more research on religious emotions in political activism.

This article also informs the study of Islamic thought by adding to a growing body of evidence suggesting that modern jihadis have been more influenced by Sufism than commonly recognized (and certainly more than they themselves would admit). Olivier Carré demonstrated long ago that Sayyid Qutb, held in high esteem by many modern militants, was influenced by Sufism.¹⁰⁷ David Cook has shown that the modern jihadi martyrology shows clear Sufi influences, notably in the way that martyrs are ascribed saint-like attributes.¹⁰⁸ Relatedly, Darryl Li has described the doctrinal cross-pollination that occurred between Arabs and Afghans during the 1980s war in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Meir Hatina has shown that ‘Abdallāh ‘Azzām—the father of modern jihadi martyrology—described martyrs as saints (*awliyā*), as having divine grace (*baraka*) and as triggering miracles (*karāmāt*), all of which are terms associated with the Sufi tradition.¹¹⁰ The weeping therefore only underlines what Hatina has described as ‘the complex and ambivalent

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Helena Flam and Debra King, *Emotions and Social Movements* (London: Routledge, 2005); James M. Jasper, ‘Emotions and social movements: twenty years of theory and research’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 37/1 (2011): 285–303.

¹⁰⁷ Olivier Carré, *Mystique et Politique: Lecture révolutionnaire du Coran par Sayyid Qutb, Frère musulman radical* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1984).

¹⁰⁸ David B. Cook, ‘Contemporary martyrdom: ideology and material culture’ in Hegghammer (ed.), *Jihadi Culture*, 151–70.

¹⁰⁹ Darryl Li, ‘Taking the place of martyrs: Afghans and Arabs under the banner of Islam’, *Arab Studies Journal*, 20/1 (2012): 12–39.

¹¹⁰ Meir Hatina, ‘Warrior Saints: ‘Abdallah ‘Azzam’s reflections on jihad and karamat’ in Meir Hatina and Meir Litvak (eds.), *Martyrdom and Sacrifice in Islam: Theological, Political and Social Contexts* (London: IB Tauris, 2017).

Salafi stance regarding Islamic mysticism in modern times'.¹¹¹ The modern jihadi movement, thus appears to have been doctrinally more heterodox than the oft-used label 'Salafi jihadi' would suggest. The same may be true of other, less militant Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, whose founder Hasan al-Bannā famously went through a mysticist phase and brought Sufi practices to the organization's early inner life.¹¹² More broadly, this insight underscores the limits of what we may call the 'Carl von Linné approach' to the study of Islamic thought and practice, namely the tendency to classify actors into neat doctrine-based categories such as Sufi and Salafi. Categorization is often analytically useful, but it must be coupled with a precise understanding of the fuzziness of conceptual borders.

The findings also inform our understanding of warrior cultures, notably by challenging the notion that brutality and sensitivity are opposites. The weeping jihadists show that the two norms can coexist in a culture that values ruthlessness and sensitivity simultaneously. Of course, this is not news to anthropologists and cultural historians, who know that, historically, many warrior cultures have combined the two, and that the stoicism of modern Western militaries is to some extent the exception. On some level, the fact that non-Muslim Western audiences are often surprised to learn about weeping jihadis speaks to their own preconceptions about masculinity and warrior ethics.

At the same time, the article has only scratched the surface of the topic of weeping in militant Islamist groups. Going forward, we need more in-depth studies of jihadi weeping to capture the finer details of weeping occasions, the subjective experience of weeping, and variation between jihadi groups. We also need more studies of weeping among non-jihadi Islamist militants such as Hamas, the Taliban, and Hezbollah, to better understand what is specific about jihadi groups.¹¹³ There is also good reason to look into weeping practices of non-Islamist militants—such as Christian and Jewish extremists, the far right and the far left and nationalist militias, to better understand the connection between weeping and warfare and the human practice of weeping more generally.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 258.

¹¹² Gudrun Krämer, *Hasan al-Banna* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2010).

¹¹³ Anecdotally, we know that in groups like Hamas and the Taliban, people weep and get called *kathīr al-bukā'*. '*al-shahīd al-qā'id al-qassāmī al-istishhādī: muḥammad aḥmad khalīl abū samrā 'abū ḥamza*' [The martyred martyrdom-seeking Qassam commander Muhammad Ahmad Khalil Abu Samra, 'Abu Hamza'], http://www.palestineremembered.com/GeoPoints/Dayr_al_Balah_958/Article_9417.html, posted 22 April 2008 (last accessed 28 March 2019).