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## **Rational, educated and prosperous: just your average suicide bomber**

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They're driven to it by their desperate poverty, we're told. They're uneducated and easily led, and manipulated into doing it by cunning leaders, we're told. Give them an economic fair shake and a college degree, and the problem will melt away.

I explain in [Onward Muslim Soldiers](#) why this isn't so, and now confirmation comes from a study reported in the [Sydney Morning Herald](#), with thanks to Teri:

Suicide bombers are not all poor, uneducated, religious fanatics or madmen, as many people believe.

Research on the social and psychological background of terrorists show they tend to be more prosperous and better educated than most in their societies, and no more religious or irrational than the average person.

A study of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad suicide terrorists from the late 1980s to 2003 found only 13 per cent were from a poor background, compared with 32 per cent of the Palestinian population in general, according to a New Scientist report.

Suicide bombers were also three times more likely to have gone on to higher education than the general population, Claude Berrebi, an economist at Princeton University in the US, found.

Ariel Merare, a psychologist at Tel Aviv University in Israel, said he had changed his view that most suicide bombers were mentally ill after studying the background of every suicide bomber in the Middle East since 1983.

"In the majority you find none of the risk factors normally associated with suicide, such as mood disorders or schizophrenia, substance abuse or a history of attempted suicide," he said. ...

Rohan Gunaratna, head of terrorism research at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, said the findings had overturned popular ideas about terrorists. "They are like you and me," he said.

The experts said resistance groups tended to adopt suicide tactics when they were losing political ground to rival groups, and used psychological techniques to ensure recruits went through with the act.

A sense of duty to a brotherhood was the most important way rational people could be persuaded to kill themselves, said Scott Atran, an anthropologist at the University of Michigan.

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