

The extreme contrast between “martyrs” in Christianity and Islam

Christian martyrs	Islamic martyrs
The martyr suffers martyrdom <i>passively</i> .	The martyr is carrying out the martyrdom <i>actively</i> .
For the martyr, martyrdom is <i>involuntary</i> and <i>unwanted</i> .	For the martyr, martyrdom is <i>voluntary</i> and <i>actively sought after</i> .
The martyr is <i>the victim and object</i> of the actions of others.	The martyr is <i>perpetrator and subject</i> , and makes others the victims, and only as a consequence might become victim and object.
The martyr <i>does not seek</i> martyrdom.	The martyr <i>seeks</i> martyrdom.
The martyr acts <i>defensively</i> .	The martyr acts <i>offensively</i> .
The martyr <i>does not use violence</i> but suffers it; he renounces violent self-defense.	The martyr <i>commits violence or plans violence</i> and may become a victim of counter-violence.
The martyr <i>is murdered</i> .	The martyr <i>murders or plans to murder</i> and might die in the process or in reaction might be killed.
The martyr is a voice for <i>life and peace</i> .	The martyr is a voice for <i>death, violence, and discord</i> .
The martyr is a voice <i>against</i> the view that violence can solve problems.	Martyrs are a voice <i>for</i> the view that violence can solve problems. ¹
<i>No one else</i> is <i>harmed</i> by the martyr. Sometimes this saves the lives of others.	Martyrdom is considered as such only if <i>others are harmed as a result</i> , or at least if that was the goal.
It is <i>morally reprehensible</i> to seek martyrdom.	It is <i>morally imperative</i> to seek martyrdom.
The martyr <i>has no political motives or goals</i> , even if his murderers may have political motives and the martyrdom may have enormous political consequences.	The martyr has <i>highly political motives and goals</i> and hopes for far-reaching political consequences.
Martyrdom is usually associated with the view that the <i>state and religious communities are separate institutions</i> .	Martyrdom is linked to the idea that <i>political and religious issues cannot be separated from one another</i> .

1 The perpetrators of the attacks of September 11, 2001, put it in classic terms: “You love life, we love death.”