

Martyrdom in Islam

Anyone dying in any manner while working sincerely in the service of Islam is a martyr or *shaheed*. On the other hand, a Muslim just by being killed in a battle is not necessarily a martyr, as shown by the following statement of the Holy Prophet:

“The first of men (whose case) will be decided on the Day of Judgment will be a man who died as a martyr. He shall be brought (before the Judgment Seat). Allah will make him recount His blessings and he will recount them. Then will Allah say: What did you do? He will say: I fought for You until I died as a martyr. Allah will say: You have told a lie. You fought that you might be called a brave warrior. And you were called so. (Then) orders will be passed against him and he will be dragged with his face downward and cast into hell.”

It is clear from this that while a Muslim may consider that a certain act would earn him martyrdom yet he may find himself condemned by God in the Hereafter for making a false claim and punished for it. The fact is that martyrdom in Islam is a spiritual rank in the life after death and no one can be sure that if he died while engaged in certain work God would bestow this rank upon him.

What we can be sure of, however, is that this rank cannot be attained by acting against the teachings of Islam, even though the deceased may have believed he was engaged in a struggle in support of Islam. What must be further emphasised is that a martyr is one who dies as *a result of someone else's action against him* which he resists as far as possible, or *due to circumstances entirely beyond his control*. It has been mentioned in the *Hadith* report quoted above that a Muslim who dies of cholera or the plague is a martyr. But, quite obviously, it is completely against the very basic teachings of Islam for a Muslim deliberately to seek to catch these diseases in order to die as a martyr! Indeed, a Muslim should take all measures to avoid falling a victim to them. But if he should happen to fall ill unintentionally and die while serving Islam he will earn a high place in the hereafter.

Similarly, a Muslim killed in battle must be killed by the action of his enemy, while he is repelling that opponent, or due to some other external cause *beyond the scope of his control and planning*, as one of the conditions to be a martyr.

Suicide is a sin, not martyrdom

The committing of suicide is a very serious sin according to the clear teachings of Islam. The Holy Qur'an instructs:

“Do not cast yourselves to destruction by your own hands.” (2:195)

“Do not kill yourselves.” (4:29)

In *Hadith* reports, committing suicide is strongly condemned by the Prophet Muhammad who said:

“Whoever commits suicide with something, will be punished with the same thing in the hell-fire.”

In *Sahih Muslim*, there is a chapter entitled *Abandoning of funeral prayer for him who committed suicide* in which it is reported that the Holy Prophet Muhammad personally refused to say the funeral prayer for a deceased who had killed himself.

In Muslim countries, attempted suicide has always been a criminal offence, for which a person may face legal penalties.

Source: [Islam, Peace and Tolerance](#)

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