

Chapter X: Martyrdom [Shahadah]

65. Overview

Martyrdom is an exalted value in the Syrian textbooks. It is given much emphasis both as an important tool in the battle against Israel and as an independent value in itself. It has such a positive connotation in Syrian parlance that a martyr's death is considered an event equivalent to a wedding party [urs], where one should be joyous rather than mournful.

President Hafez Assad was known for his deep interest in the martyrdom issue, which is openly discussed in the textbooks. Quotations from his statements on this subject are given as well and the students are urged to study them.

But the indoctrination effort regarding this issue is not restricted to Assad's sayings. The textbooks employ a variety of other means to inculcate the ideal of martyrdom in the minds of the students, such as poetry and language exercises. There are also home and class assignments to this effect. In Grade 12, after which the students are to join the Syrian army, the indoctrination effort reaches its climax with a personal pledge on behalf of the students to seek martyrdom.

66. An Exalted Value

Martyrdom is the Right way

"The Way of Martyrdom

This is the way of truth. This is the way of justice. This is the way of glory. This is the way of martyrdom." (Civics, Grade 6, p. 119)

Martyrdom is an Occasion for Joy, not for Mourning

"Martyrdom has become the highest decoration which every person wishes to obtain. It is a social wedding party celebrated instead of [expressions of] sorrow and consolation among the people." (National-Socialist Education, Grade 9, p. 76)

"The Martyrdom wedding parties have increased during this period of our struggle against Zionism and Imperialism." (Reader and Literary Texts, Grade 8, p. 9)

"What position will you take, offer your condolences on [occasion of] seeking martyrdom, or congratulate on that [occasion]? Why?" (Homework, Reader and Literary Texts, Grade 9, p. 44)

67. Martyrdom as the Road to Liberation

"... our steadfast nation has believed that martyrdom is the road to victory and liberation." (Islamic Education, Grade 9, p. 67)

"A large number of our youths in present times are bent on dying so that their nation would live. You see them rushing towards death, trying to reach it ahead of one another. They are proud to have martyrdom as the seal of their lives for the sake of the liberation of their homes and homeland that the Zionists have occupied." ("Direction and Urge for Holy War and Martyrdom", Islamic Education, Grade 5, p. 108)

"The martyr outlines for us the correct road to the recovery of the land and the seizure of the usurped rights. What is this road?" (Homework, Reader and Literary Texts, Grade 9, p. 95)

"Our country, our country
Our Jihad is for her
Our seeking of martyrdom is for her
Our country, our country
[Question:] Why do we wage a Holy War and ask for Martyrdom?"
(Reader, Grade 4, pt. 2, pp. 87- 88)

"By means of martyrdom we shall recover our rights and our dignity and maintain them." (National-Socialist Education, Grade 12, p. 62)

68. President Hafez Assad and the Martyrdom Issue

"The leader of the Arab nation, President Hafez Assad, has believed in martyrdom, has given it the highest degree and considered it a holy duty, so much so, that he has wished it for himself." (Civics, Grade 6, p. 111)

"The Comrade Leader has given martyrdom and martyrs [that kind of] attention that no other leader in the world has. He has spoken of it on numerous national and all-Arab occasions, in party congresses and [in congresses] of popular organizations." (National-Socialist Education, Grade 8, p. 151)

"The Fighting Leader Comrade Hafez Assad has given the martyrs and martyrdom extraordinary care which no [other] leader in the Arab homeland has done. (National-Socialist Education, Grade 9, p. 76)

"The Comrade Leader, the Primary Teacher of our nation's generations [Syrian president Hafez Assad], wishes that his life end in martyrdom for the sake of the grandeur of our Arab homeland and the dignity of our nation." (National-Socialist Education, Grade 12, p. 63)

"I always say: Our slogan should be "martyrdom or victory", and I say martyrdom first, because martyrdom is our road to victory. [Question:]

What is the slogan which the President asks for its implementation?"
(President Hafez Assad + Homework, Reader, Grade 5, pt. 1, pp.107-108)

"Let us make seeking martyrdom [Istish'had] a higher value in society. Seeking martyrdom is an essential need in every national struggle against the invaders and the imperialists. It is the essential basis, which is inevitable and has no alternative, for the protection of the homeland and the liberation of the land... Let us glorify martyrdom and let it become important in the souls of all of us. Let it be our way whenever the homeland calls." (President Hafez Assad, Reader, Grade 6, pt. 1, p. 138 and see also Grammar, Dictation and Script, Grade 7, p. 68)

"We have believed in martyrdom as a road to [achieving our] right, victory and life. Martyrdom has become a general love of the masses and a general heroism of the masses. It will definitely remain [as] our love which no [other] love would compete with. Let martyrdom live in our souls as a fruitful feeling, everlasting conviction, an axiom not to be debated and a belief not to be doubted." (President Hafez Assad, National-Socialist Education, Grade 8, p. 155)

"Martyrdom is an integral part of our mental and physical entity."
(President Hafez Assad, Civics, Grade 6, p. 115)

"Let our time be a time of martyrdom. Let us live in a time of martyrdom."
(President Hafez Assad, Civics, Grade 6, p. 118 and see also National-Socialist Education, Grade 12, p. 63 and National-Socialist Education, Grade 9, p. 79)

"O members of the youth movement, you are the first ones among those who should hold martyrdom sacred and carry its flag... We shall not feel dignified and enjoy this feeling unless we feel that martyrdom is an integral part of our mental and physical entity." (President Hafez Assad, Civics, Grade 6, p. 119 and see also National-Socialist Education, Grade 12, p. 62)

"We should stay ready to rush vigorously towards the honor of martyrdom." (President Hafez Assad, Reader and Literary Texts, Grade 7, p. 8)

69. Other Means of Inculcating Martyrdom

Through poetry

"The body that yearns for martyrdom..." (Reader and Literary Texts, Grade 9, p. 91)

"I shall carry my soul in my palm and toss it in the abyss of destruction."
("The Martyr's Poem", Grammar, Eloquence and Prosody, Grade 12, p. 102 and again on p. 145)

"In what verse did he [the poet] refer to our country as a source of martyrs?" (Homework, Reader and Literary Texts, Grade 9, p. 51)

Through language exercises

"The martyr watered the homeland's soil with his blood." (Reader, Grade 5, pt. 2, p. 107)

"It is inevitable for the Arab to have either martyrdom or victory." (Principles of Grammar, Dictation and Script, Grade 5, p. 19)

"The heroic soldiers seek martyrdom on the fields of honor." (Grammar, Dictation and Script, Grade 8, p. 10)

"Think of death as a sweet [thing] on the road to martyrdom and [thus] you will build the glory of our Arab nation." (Grammar, Grade 9, p. 55)

"How difficult it is [for him] not to end his Jihad with martyrdom; how cruel it is [for him] to be deprived of martyrdom." (Grammar, Grade 9, p. 167)

"O my country... you will be given the blood of the martyrs." Grammar, Grade 10, p. 52)

"We shall not hesitate to sacrifice our blood in order to be elevated to the ranks of the martyrs." (Grammar, Grade 10, p. 62)

"I shall sacrifice my soul in order to water my homeland with my blood." (Grammar, Eloquence and Prosody, Grade 11, p. 16)

"Courage, O revolutionary [fighter]; rush towards martyrdom." (Grammar, Eloquence and Prosody, Grade 11, p. 184)

70. Assignments on Martyrdom

"Write, on one page, the story of a martyr from among the martyrs of the homeland and then expound upon the greatness of martyrdom and its impact on our life." (Homework, Reader and Literary Texts, Grade 7, p. 16)

"Some of the students will be assigned with the [task of] issuing a class magazine about the importance of martyrdom and the martyrs for the cause of victory of the Arab nation's goals." (Assignment, National-Socialist Education, Grade 12, p. 64)

"Write an essay about martyrdom and martyrs with quotations from the Fighting Leader Comrade Hafez Assad's sayings and examples from your [own] environment of martyrs who fell on the battlefield in defense of the homeland." (National-Socialist Education, Grade 9, p. 80)

Personal pledge by twelfth graders to seek martyrdom

"We pledge to the Leader of our March to offer our blood and soul for the cause of our nation's grandeur and the defeat of the unjust colonialist. Let our wish become a slogan for seeking martyrdom for the realization of the goals of our Arab nation. Let us love martyrdom passionately as it means immortality. Let us bless the martyrs and let their way be our everlasting wish. I hope that my life will end in martyrdom only." (National-Socialist Education, Grade 12, p. 63)