

Beliefs.

“One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.”

Peace is a word you do not hear that often in today’s society. Every morning there is new headline, whether it be conflict in the Middle East, or terrorist threats on the US, it is very rarely you can pick up a newspaper and read that all is well with the world.

It was a peaceful Sunday morning. I was up early; the sun was bright and warm, although the air was cold. All was silent and I was contemplating on what I should have for break fast, and what I would do for the rest of the day. Then a slam of the letterbox broke the silence, and the thud of the Sunday paper ended the peace.

It was one single headline that inspired me to write this essay.

“Suicide bomb hits Haifa’s Heart”

One new story that proved that there is no such thing as peace, and nothing could ever be well with world.

It was the Sabbath before Yom Kippur – the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. Families were packed in the Maxim restaurant in the costal town of Haifa, Israel. It was a pleasant scene, the place was packed as it was every Saturday, and children were still in their swimsuits after an enjoyable day at the beach. There were football players gathering as they would every week to celebrate their victories. The place was bustling with families, all enthusiastic and optimistic. They could have been contemplating what they should have to eat that afternoon, or could have been discussing their day’s activities. All was well, what could go wrong?

Suddenly, a 29-year-old woman ran into the restaurant and detonated a belt filled with approximately 22lb of explosives. Everyone around was either wounded or dead. There were pools of blood, bodies of children, and severed limbs scattered across the floor. It was a massacre. The windows were left in smithereens, walls and pillars were riddled with holes, and the ceiling was in tatters. Devastation, destruction and death. And why? Only the 29-year-old lawyer, who’s severed head lay in the centre of the restaurant, could explain the real reasons why, but it was too late.

So what did Hanadi Jaradat hope to achieve by this homicide? What made her commit this “vicious act of terrorism” as described by George W. Bush.

Hanadi Jaradat was a member of the Islamic Jihad, a small group of Muslims that fight to protect their religion. They fight for a number of things, but the emphasis is usually on change, whether it is political change, democratic change or even social change. Certain people may not agree about the way their country or state is being run, or they may dislike the way they are being treated. In the case of Muslims and Jews, they have different opinions on who should be living in Israel. These different opinions and beliefs are the cause of the fire, blood and anguish that we see today.

There are many groups around the world like Islamic Jihad that believe they are trying to create change. That is their key word – “believe.” The people who carry out these horrific actions believe that what they are doing is right. These sick people believe that there is nothing wrong in gruesomely murdering 51 people. These people believe that there is nothing wrong with murdering children, as long as, they’re doing what they believe is right - what does it matter what anyone else believes?

There are many reasons why people carry out such attacks, like the suicide bombing in Haifa. People who believe in a particular cause will try everything they can to achieve what they believe in. The problem comes when another group, or even religion believe in the complete opposite. All efforts will be made to try and create change in a normal, democratic and political way, but if they do not gain the power they require, certain groups will turn to ways of change which can involve guerrilla warfare, terrorism and suicide bombings.

These people who believe in taking horrific measures to create change are called Freedom Fighters. They define freedom in what they are changing. Another belief of these barbarous humans is that God will reward them immediately, and they will go straight to paradise. How can a murderer be rewarded? Why do they deserve to go to paradise? In their eyes they maybe achieving something – but what are they really achieving? Death and mass destruction: do you really think that that is a worthwhile achievement? These freedom fighters may think they are gaining the freedom that we all quite rightly deserve, but isn’t there a more sensible, less savage way of achieving it? Once a “freedom fighter” has carried out a specific attack they will be praised by the followers of that certain group or religion that is fighting for so-called freedom. Their portrait will be framed, garlanded and will be pasted on walls, for hundreds of other potential “freedom fighters” to admire. They will become a martyr, because they truly believe that they are fighting for justice.

However, in our eyes these freedom fighters are branded as terrorists. They provoke terror, cause extreme devastation, and kill many innocent

people as well as bringing immense pain into the lives of others. Although, according to their beliefs it is all perfectly fine. Yet is lawfully and morally wrong! So who decides on what is right and wrong? One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. Who gets to choose? If one man creates freedom, he has done something right, but at the same time is breaking the law, and breaking the hearts of many innocent people.

Another example of "freedom fighters" is the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. This is a group of suicide bombers dedicated to gaining back their homeland. Vasantha, a 17-year-old boy, almost indistinguishable from any other 17-year-old boy, explains why he is prepared to take such drastic action, "This is most supreme sacrifice I can make. The only way we can get our homeland is through arms. That is the only way anybody will listen to us." Soon enough Vasantha will leave his home and travel away, perhaps to Colombo, where he will strap a belt, filled with explosives, and steadily walk towards a congested street, or busy restaurant. He may target a single sex group, because the majority would have partners, lovers or husbands, so in this way more people would suffer. He may even target young mothers with children, to cause even more impact, pain and grief. Whatever his target, the effects are devastating. Creating panic and terror among ordinary citizens, like you and I.

Nevertheless, there is something to hope for. There are people in our world using all their power to try and prevent these horrific attacks from happening. There are also many peace campaigns aimed especially at bringing peace to terror-struck areas such as Israel and the Middle East. Since the terrorist attacks of 9-11 the United States of America is one country that is dedicated to achieving peace. Unfortunately this seems impossible, and any hope of peace is a long way off yet. The main reason for this comes back to the word "belief." When the American Army are sent to countries to try and stop terrorists they are causing terror themselves. They believe what they are doing is right; on the other hand they are committing moral crimes. Killing hundreds. Abusing thousands. One example is the recent war in Iraq. Soldiers killed thousands of innocent people, and captured many others, in a hope to achieve what? Freedom? Terror? One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.

In addition there are many terrorists in the United States itself, though this fact seems to be ignored when George W Bush is preaching about how successful the US is in trying to stop terrorism. This important

factor is outlined in the controversial Number 1 pop song entitled “Where Is The Love,” sung by the American group “The Black Eyed Peas” It contains the lyrics:

“Overseas we try to stop terrorism,
But we still got terrorists here living in the USA,
The big CIA.”

This lyric is not the only heart hitting lyric, but really does make you think of the effects terrorism is having. This is one of the reasons the song was written. To hit the heart, and make people realise how important our world is. (And to make millions of pounds from record sales around the world!) So why is America so keen on keeping the peace in the Middle East, when there are as many problems right on its doorstep? I, myself, think that people need to get their priorities right. They need to realise that what they are doing might change the lives of some, but will bring dreadful effects on the lives of others. Furthermore permanent changes need to be made, it is very well helping people, but it needs to be effective in the long run. People like George W. Bush, and other American leaders must be able to think of a way of creating change. They have lived in a country that have morals, and have been highly educated on what is right and what is wrong. They have the power to change their country, and because many other countries are under the influence of the US (for instance the UK) they could have the power to change the world. Groups like the Islamic Jihad, however, do not have the power, and this is why they resort to using violence. Many of the members do not have any understanding of moral issues, and claim that the Western societies are immoral, bringing a clash of values and once again different beliefs. In certain groups today more and more of the followers are teenagers. These young individuals have usually been brainwashed into believing that they are fighting for justice. According to sources (*The Sunday Times*) late teens are when people are most vulnerable. The message of belief is preached over and over again making it easier to convert young people into believing anything. However, the age is decreasing rapidly. Many younger teenagers are forced into following the beliefs of “freedom fighters” because of peer pressure. This may come from group leaders, other followers and even their own families. For example, fathers who have lost their wife’s and daughters due to sexual discrimination would want revenge. To help achieve this, they would force their sons to be part of the group that aims to create change. Another group that is easily targeted is women. Women who have suffered injustice are susceptible to becoming “freedom fighters.” The amount of women suicide bombers is steadily increasing. Previously one in every five known attackers was female, this is now one

in three. It just goes to show how, with training and brainwashing, a perfectly normal person can be converted into believing anything.

I strongly believe this is wrong. Leaders of these particular groups should not target young, vulnerable people. These people should have the freedom to live how they want. They should have the freedom to believe in what they want. And they should have the freedom to achieve what they want. They should not be brainwashed into believing in a certain cause, and should definitely not be working to achieve change, in the horrific, immoral ways in which they do.

Many people do not realise the effects of terrorism in our world, and how even trying to fight it can cause more anguish. It is quite easy to think that everything is well with the world. But next time when you're waking up to a peaceful Sunday morning, just remember that peace is not a common word.