



Martyrdom: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)

Jolyon Mitchell

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Martyrdom is not only a sharply contested term and act, but it has a long history of provoking controversy. One person's 'martyr' is another's 'terrorist', and one person's 'martyrdom operation' is another's 'suicide bombing'. Suicide attacks have made recurring questions about martyrdom more pertinent to current discussions. What is martyrdom? Why are some people drawn towards giving up their lives as martyrs? What place does religion play in inciting and creating martyrs? How are martyrs made? Why are some martyrs and martyrdoms remembered more than others? How helpful is the distinction between active and passive martyrdoms? In order both to answer such questions and to understand the contemporary debates about martyrdom, it is helpful to consider its diverse roots.

In this Very Short Introduction, Jolyon Mitchell provides a historical analysis to shed light on how the concept and practice of martyrdom has evolved, as well as the different ways in which it is used today.

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