

# September 11, 2024

By Phyllis Chesler

**That dreadful day is back again; it will always be 9/11, both on the calendar and in our memories. It will forever be remembered as the 21st century's Day of Infamy.**

Islamic Jihad had pierced a huge hole in history. None of us will—or should—ever be the same.

On September 11, 2001, at about 11am, I walked over to my computer and typed the sentence: "Now we are all Israelis." Afterwards, Osama bin Laden called the assault on America "blessed attacks" against the infidel...the new Christian-Jewish crusade." He explained that the Twin Towers had fallen because of American support for Israel.

War against the infidel and a new kind of antisemitism, masked as anti-Zionism, had been declared. I had no choice but to write *The New Anti-Semitism*, and to document the Jihad against the West that was already well underway.

Civilians anywhere, everywhere, are potential targets. Increasingly, at airports, in government buildings, at television stations, the security has grown tight, and resembles the kind of security that Israel alone was first forced to pioneer and that now exists for every Jewish building in Europe and the United States.

Jihad came to the United States quite a while ago. For most of us, It slipped right in under the radar.

In 1968, Palestinian Christian, Sirhan Sirhan, assassinated Presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy because America was supplying weapons to Israel. Sirhan was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment.

In 1990, Egyptian-born El Sayyid Nosair, assassinated Rabbi

Meir Kahane, who preached Jewish self-defense, founded the Jewish Defense League, was a member of the Israeli parliament, and who did not believe that Arabs would allow Jews to ever live peacefully in the Holy Land. Nosair, represented by William Kunstler, was originally sentenced to a maximum of 22 years in prison. When it was discovered that he had been involved with the "blind Sheikh's" plot to blow up the World Trade Center, Nosair was tried in federal court and found guilty of terrorism charges. He was given a life sentence.

In 1993, Egyptian-born Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, (the "blind sheikh"), plotted to blow up New York City landmarks including the George Washington Bridge, and the Lincoln and the Holland Tunnels. In 1993, he and his followers successfully exploded a truck bomb at the World Trade Center which killed six civilians and injured 1,000. He was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison. American leftist lawyers defended him and carried his messages out for him.

In 1994, Lebanese born Rashad Baz shot at a busload of high school yeshiva students on the Brooklyn Bridge, killing 16 year-old Ari Halberstam and wounding three others. He was found guilty and sentenced to 141 years in prison; his act was reclassified as one of terrorism.

Far from home, in 1983, 220 Marines, 18 sailors, and three Army soldiers were blown up in their barracks in Beirut. In 2000, 17 American sailors were blown up in Yemen on the U.S.S. Cole. Since then, many more soldiers have been killed, blown up in war zones from Afghanistan and throughout the Middle East.

As of 9/11, Jihad was more visible to Americans and seemed here to stay. Countless attempted Jihad attacks have been stopped but many more were successful. They are too numerous to mention here. Many jihadists were considered lone, or mentally ill actors but all were fully indoctrinated supporters of Jihadi-terrorist groups.

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I was not a direct victim on 9/11/01. I did not personally know anyone who was killed on that infamous day in the World Trade Center or the Pentagon. I was at home, transfixed before the TV set, watching it live as it continued to happen, and I did not move from my spot. I knew that when I got up, nothing would ever be the same again; I would no longer feel safe in my native city or country or in the world; I would no longer be able to assume that life as I'd known it—with all its illusions—would continue. How could it?



At 8:45 A.M. and 9:03 A.M., two planes (American Airlines flight #11 and United Airlines flight #175) hijacked by Islamic terrorists, crashed into the World Trade Center. At 9:17 A.M. the Federal Aviation Administration shut down all New York

City airports, and for the first time in history, all American airports. At 9:30 A.M. President Bush announced that the

country had been attacked by terrorists. At 9:43 A.M. a third hijacked plane (American Airlines flight #77) crashed into the Pentagon. At 9:45 A.M. the White House was evacuated. At 10:05 A.M. the south tower collapsed. At 10:00 A.M. a center of the Pentagon collapsed and a fourth hijacked plane (American Airlines flight #93) crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. At 10:13 A.M. the United Nations was evacuated. At 10:54 A.M. Israel evacuated all Israeli diplomatic missions to the United States. At 12:04 P.M. the Los Angeles airport was evacuated and closed. And at 1:27 P.M. the city of Washington declared a state of emergency.

At 4:25 P.M., the American Stock Exchange, the New York Stock Exchange, and the NASDAQ announced they would remain closed on September 12th. By late afternoon, the wind began to carry bits and pieces of charred paper, smoky scraps of metal, bits of unidentifiable debris into my neighborhood, less than two miles from Ground Zero, and the air smelled of scorched souls, acrid and agonizing. It was a sickening combination of industrial fuels, hate, and human cries; it burned my throat and my eyes and my mind. I will never forget it.

Nor will I forget the small impromptu shrine that instantly and instinctively arose nearby: flowers, candles, an American flag, and a small umbrella to shield this makeshift memorial from the elements—I paid my respects there almost every day for more than a year.

A firehouse was located two blocks away from where I then lived. They lost twelve firefighters out of twenty-five on that day. For months afterwards, the firehouse was ablaze with lit candles and flowers. Wordlessly, tearfully, people brought baked goods and left small donations; bagpipes pierced the Brooklyn air with sonorous grief at funeral after funeral for these suddenly missing firefighters.

They will never come back—not one of them—and we will never see their like again. I made it a point to read each of the

obituaries published in the New York Times very slowly. I thought about each person, tried to visit with them posthumously, grasp who they were, their hopes and achievements. I felt sorry for those who left children behind—and for who had no children. I did not focus on women over men, or on whites over blacks, or on Jews over non-Jews, or on Americans over non-Americans. I focused on them all, equally. Now, they all belong to me and I am part of their legacy.

I survive them. We all do. In their place and for their sakes we must find the courage to stand up to evil as best we can; there are many ways to do so. We owe it to them. From now on we will be pleading their case—and the case of all civilians everywhere who are now hostages to terror.

9/11 has continued for a long time; it is still happening; it is not over yet.