



# **Talking to Terrorists: Understanding the Psycho-Social Motivations of Militant Jihadi Terrorists, Mass Hostage Takers, Suicide Bombers & Mart**

*Anne Speckhard*

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This is an account of traveling through the West Bank and Gaza, into the prisons of Iraq, down the alleyways of the Casablanca slums, to Chechnya, into the radicalized neighborhoods of Belgium, the UK, France and the Netherlands, of sitting with the hostages of Beslan and Nord Ost, and of talking to terrorists. Dr. Speckhard gives us the inside story of what puts vulnerable individuals on the terrorist trajectory and what might take them back off of it. With more than four hundred interviews with terrorists and their friends, family members and hostages, Dr. Speckhard is one of the few experts to have such a breadth of experience. She visited, and even stayed overnight, in the intimate spaces of terrorists' homes, interviewed them in their stark prison cells, or met them in the streets of their cities and villages. Dr. Speckhard gives us a rare glimpse of terrorists within their own contexts. From the mouths of terrorists, their family members, comrades-and even their hostages, we learn of the manipulation of human weakness that can lead to violent acts. Through careful research of culture and religion and a genuine desire to understand the factors that motivate individuals to embrace terrorism, Dr. Speckhard deftly defines the lethal cocktail that leads to the creation of a terrorist. An internationally recognized expert on the psychological aspects of terrorism and an expert in the area of posttraumatic stress disorder, Dr. Speckhard's research also produces a knowledge of how to disengage, deradicalize, rehabilitate, and reverse the trajectory of a terrorist. Dr. Speckhard's studies spanning over a decade provide us with a deeper understanding of one of the most dangerous and violent phenomena of our times.

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