

Can the Terrorist Be Grieved?

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ABSTRACT This article analyzes the frames of violence and suffering at play when perpetrators of violence are labeled terrorists. Building on Judith Butler's notion of grievability, it proposes the concept of forbidden grief to understand how the terrorist is constituted as an inhuman subject. The article argues that the terrorist is the result of a process of radical dehumanization that frames them as an existential threat against whom eradication remains the only possible solution. Taking as examples the attacks in France (November 13, 2015) and Barcelona (August 17, 2017), the article analyzes the difficulties that the term *terrorist* presents for equal grief, inherently dividing the population between grievable lives and those whose grief will be forbidden. Concluding by considering the contemporary violence in the Gaza Strip, the article examines whether there is space in the public sphere for such mourning, or even for this question, and how the notion of terrorist can be used to limit grief and to justify extreme forms of violence.

KEYWORDS grievability, the terrorist, dehumanization, radical violence, illegitimate suffering

The definition of *terrorism* presents multiple problems in distinguishing it from other forms of violence like criminal or military ones. One difficulty arises from the fact that the term is not self-designated but is used rather to classify the actions of another.¹ This becomes particularly clear in narratives that frame the terrorist and terrorism as “a civilizational struggle,”² a struggle against evil, or as *against* the laws of war.³ Yet the terrorist is neither an ahistorical nor a “fixed category.”⁴ *Terrorist* or *terrorism* receive different definitions depending on “who determines what is a legitimate government, what are human rights, and what are the rules of war.”⁵ My interest lies in discerning what model of categorizing violence is at play when state actors and public narratives classify political violence as “terrorism,” along with the implications of such labeling. To the extent that the term is used exclusively to describe others’ actions, the term does more than merely describe a particular type of violence. From the moment a subject is authoritatively labeled a terrorist, annihilating violence against them becomes justifiable as well as desirable. As Lisa Stampnitzky outlines, this framing prevents the consideration of

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terrorists as *rational* actors. It is “a refusal to consider that those we label ‘terrorist’ might have reasons, or rational explanations, for their actions.”⁶ This categorization of terrorists as inherently irrational is facilitated by rapid moralization intrinsic to the concept of terrorism. The terrorist, as I hope to show, becomes at once a subject of illegitimate violence and an object of radical violence.

This article will argue that the model of violence that the category of the terrorist implies can be exposed through the metrics of *grievability*. To understand the forces at work that legitimize violence against others for the self-preservation of an “Us,” Judith Butler proposes the concept of grievability. This concept brings to light the differential production of life and provides a framework for investigating whose lives are worth living, preserving, and protecting in our societies, and whose lives are not. Butler’s claim is that the differential in grievability among forms of life represents the differential allocation of their value of life, distinguishing between *grievable lives*—that is, those whose deaths would be marked as a loss—and *ungrievable lives*, those lives whose deaths would not be marked as a loss when they die. In this way, grievability works with a clear equation: “If a life is not grievable, it is not quite a life, it does not qualify as a life and is not worth a note.”⁷ A grievable life, on the other hand, is a life considered “worth living and worth preserving,” a life that is “given the condition to live and to be registered” as a life.⁸

My proposal is to take Butler’s framework of grievability and add a further distinction *within* ungrievable lives to differentiate between the lives that will not be grieved (that is, the lives that would not count as a loss if and when they die), and those lives whose ungrievability will take the most extreme form, not only because their lives would not count as a loss when they die but because mourning them will be forbidden and illegitimate. I shall refer to this as *forbidden grief*. While Butler considers terrorist violence and analyzes the problems implicated in its definition,⁹ they do not consider the impossibility of grief that I want to thematize through the terrorist. Thus, I want to address this absence in Butler’s analysis by exploring the difficulties that the category of the terrorist represents for equal grief and how it divides the population between those who are grievable and those for whom grieving is forbidden. Furthermore, exploring the terrorist from this framework opens the ethical and political question of how not only violence but also suffering *for* the so-called terrorist is framed and subsequent distinctions between forms of legitimate and illegitimate suffering.

With the question titling this text, “Can the terrorist be grieved?” I do not mean to discuss the real possibility of grieving those labeled as terrorists. It is obvious that their lives can and indeed are grieved. Grievability, rather, needs to be understood in inherently relational terms. When a subject is or not grievable, it is not to imply that all lives are grieved or not grieved by all political subjects.¹⁰

Instead, my opening question holds rhetorical force by seeking to reveal the framing of violence implied by the category of the terrorist.

To analyze these issues, I will focus on two attacks claimed by IS (the Islamic State), the attack in Paris in November 2015 and the attack in Barcelona in August 2017, as well as the political and media responses that followed. In concluding, I extend my analysis to the ongoing violence in Gaza as a clear example of how democratic states use the category of terrorism to undertake annihilating forms of violence and delineating whose grief is forbidden. Yet Gaza also demonstrates how forbidden grief is and can be contested.

Drawing on those examples, my aim is to examine the challenges that democratic states encounter when responding to conflict and violence in the context of terrorism. Furthermore, analyzing the category of the terrorist from this perspective enables me to explore the structures and vocabularies of recognition that exist for the political (over)representation of the Human.¹¹ Dehumanization involves framing the enemy's violence in absolute antagonistic terms, effectively stripping them of their Humanity and obstructing an understanding of the conflict. I contend that dehumanizing the enemy and portraying them as the embodiment of absolute evil poses a direct threat to the fundamental values of democratic states.

An Inhuman Enemy

Dehumanized individuals, as David Livingstone Smith explains,¹² engender an uncanny ambivalence that complicates the ability to define them. Their portrayal calls established categories into question, transgressing and infringing upon the boundaries of the established system of meaning: they are *neither completely animal nor sufficiently human*. In this way, the dehumanized resembles what Julia Kristeva described as “the encounter with the other—whom we perceive by means of sight, hearing, smell, but do not ‘frame’ within our consciousness.”¹³ In other words, they question established categories and definitions, calling into question the stability of meaning. Dehumanization does not occur, therefore, because of “how they [those dehumanized] appear to us”; rather, it “is primarily a matter of how we classify things.”¹⁴ The dehumanized appears as *human* in the eyes of the dehumanizer, yet they cannot be identified as Human, since something about them is understood to be a transgression, a violation of the Human, in such a way as to endanger *the* normative system, values, and form of life. In this way, the Human here does not correspond to the taxonomic category of *Homo sapiens*. Rather, it is a moral category, an ideological and universalized construct that disregards other possibilities of being human and brings with it a hierarchical framework for evaluating the different forms of life.¹⁵

In considering dehumanization, Livingstone Smith helpfully distinguishes between two possible forms. The first form refers to what he calls “enfeebling

dehumanization,”¹⁶ where “dehumanized people are experienced as docile creatures, as beasts of burden or objects of ridicule.”¹⁷ The second form of dehumanization, “demonizing” dehumanization, interests me here. When this dehumanization occurs, the dehumanized is considered dangerous because their threat is not only a physical one but a transgression to the order of the Human itself. Thus, the perception of a physical threat is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the form of dehumanization to take place. As Livingstone Smith indicates, many beings can be considered physically threatening without being dehumanized. To be dehumanized, the other needs to be understood as “horrifying,” which means that they must be seen as threatening not only to physical existence but also to the established order. This form of dehumanization is well represented in Fanon’s analysis of how the colonial “Manichean” world represents the world of the Native:

As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation the settler paints the native as a sort of *quintessence of evil*. Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. . . . The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also *the negation of values*. He is, let us dare to admit, *the enemy of values*, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces.¹⁸

It is this form of dehumanization, where the dehumanized appears not *only* as a subhuman, inferior creature but as the negation and the *transgression* of whatever the Human represents, that produces the absolute *in-human* enemy. From the moment this other transgresses the established order—and I use *order* in Rancière’s sense, as the order “of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying”¹⁹—an apparatus opens to enable actions that would otherwise be considered irregular. Thus, the irregularity or violation of the inhuman enemy’s threat allows and justifies irregularity by the regulator. It is a mechanism “for displacing responsibility that acts as a condemnation of the other’s evil and a validation of one’s evil in the same breath.”²⁰

The category of the inhuman results, in this way, from a process of dehumanization, facilitating the hierarchization of lives’ value and consequently establishing a framework of understanding to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate forms of violence. In its most extreme form, the discriminatory and vexatious treatment toward beings outside the Human²¹ stops being perceived as cruel or oppressive, appearing as necessary, legitimate, and justified. This makes dehumanization a crucial instrument of facilitating violence and contributing “to indifference to the suffering of the victims of violence,”²² as well as a central feature in

comprehending the legitimization of violence. A key contemporary example of this form of inhuman enmity is represented by the category of the terrorist. The terrorist enables a “frame for understanding violence”²³ to expel those so named from the frames of recognizability of the Human, because their violence is “unrecognizable as human activity.”²⁴ This characterization facilitates justification for their persecution as well as any form of violence against them.

The contemporary notion of terrorism as a form of illegitimate violence to monitor, study, and combat is the product of a particular political history. Prior to the 1970s, the category was used infrequently. The events that would now be associated with terrorism tended to be described as insurgencies driven by concrete and understandable wrongs rather than by evil acts. “For instance,” Maryam Jamshidi writes, “mid-twentieth century analysis of violent revolutionary movements—occurring in places as wide-ranging as Vietnam, Kenya, Cyprus and Northern Ireland—typically framed those formations as engaged in strategic opposition to a ruling regime motivated by causes like colonialism and racism.”²⁵ It was from the 1970s onward that terrorism coalesced into a moral framework for delegitimizing the enemies of the state and became synonymous with evil acts perpetrated mainly by Arabs and Muslims. As Jamshidi explains, the first-ever conference on international terrorism took place in 1979 and was organized by the current prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, and his father. Their goal was to convince attendees that this new phenomenon of international terrorism was “a satanic threat from irrational demonic enemies that was anathema to Western values of freedom and democracy and aimed to destroy the West itself. To save themselves, Benzion Netanyahu argued, Western countries had to abandon commitments to international law and multilateral, UN-led action and instead used whatever means necessary to annihilate the threat of terrorism.”²⁶ Stampnitzky outlines how during the 1980s and 1990s terrorism came to be understood as an attack on civilization that needed to be stopped through war and eventually took shape as a designation for an irrational and enormously dangerous threat. These ideas became an omnipresent element of public policy, particularly in the United States, after the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. This reopened a doctrine “to provide the necessary legal cover for the extraordinary practices of counter-violence”²⁷ and to authorize extreme violence against human beings “in the service of humanity.”²⁸

Given this history, a new kind of war against the terrorist as a representation of evil and of inhuman enmity²⁹ becomes possible. The *war on terror* becomes a war “against indefinite, immaterial enemies,” and its limits “are rendered indeterminate, both spatially and temporally.”³⁰ The war against terror enables, as Talal Asad notes, a “redefinition of ‘necessary violence’”³¹ that endangers the treatment that democracies should guarantee to any human being. War will be always possible against the terrorist, and yet the terrorist will neither receive the

protection of the laws of war nor the benefits of a legitimate adversary. They are “exiled from the law of war and the law of nations but are still subject to wars waged by other nations, thus opening them to a series of nearly limitless abuses and perversions of a more material kind.”³² Torture and indefinite detention are two central examples of the kinds of practices that have become “the core of a new mode of governance.”³³ Thus, the rhetorical force of the term *terrorist* seeks to justify and legitimize practices that involve suspending laws and transgressing established human rights, on the grounds that “since uncivilized opponents do not abide by international law, they cannot be protected by it.”³⁴ That is, because state actors inherently frame the terrorist’s war as a declaration of war against Humanity (i.e., Democracy, Civilization), Humanity may declare war on the terrorist.³⁵ Democratic states therefore use the figure of the terrorist as not just a rhetorical but a legal tool to authorize violence in the name of Civilization—or Humanity, or Democracy—against the one who is accused of illegitimate actions. This framework thereby distinguishes between violence regulated by the state—i.e., legal violence—and that carried out by nonstate actors, which remains irregular and criminal.³⁶

In this way, the notion of the terrorist derives from the state’s monopolization of violence. Its central function concerns delimitating what is legitimate and illegitimate, authorizing legal justification for extraordinary violent practices.³⁷ To justify these forms of political violence, the state requires the mechanism of dehumanization. Dehumanization, in turn, elicits “implications for the extension and self-justificatory procedures of state sovereignty.”³⁸ The moment one identifies the inhuman enemy, one simultaneously identifies oneself as the “forces of the good.”³⁹ Thus, the authorities that identify the terrorist at the same time strengthen their own status as guardians of the good. A good example of this codetermination can be found in a speech from January 2002 by George W. Bush:

Thousands of dangerous killers, schooled in the methods of murder, often supported by outlaw regimes, are now spread throughout the world like ticking time bombs, set to go off without warning. . . . The United States of America will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons. . . . States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world.⁴⁰

The terrorist opens up, in this way, the question of what establishes the basis of sovereignty. Expelled and excluded from the political and legal frame in which life is protected and guaranteed by the laws, as a demonized life the terrorist stops counting, so that annihilating violence against them will be not only justified but demanded. They are the external agent of evil against whom the sovereign can

necessarily act, and at the same time, the sovereign state affirms its own sovereignty by identifying the terrorist.

A central reference point for terrorism today is the Islamic State. The paramilitary Islamist group claimed its authority over the entire Muslim world and proclaimed itself to be a worldwide caliphate in June 2014. The group has been defined as a terrorist organization by the UN as well as numerous countries. The IS is responsible for multiple human rights violations and war crimes, including genocide against the Yazidi people. Their videos of beheadings, as well as other forms of execution of civilians, soldiers, and journalists, are also widely known, having been distributed in the media and across the internet. Their declaration of a holy war in the name of Islam also constructs an inhuman enemy—the infidels (*kuffār*)—against whom extreme forms of violence are justified and indeed demanded. The IS therefore contradicts the humanitarian ideology of democratic states and rejects any idea of universal ethics and human rights.⁴¹

For their part, democratic states face a double problem. By definition, the terrorist is an actor, on one hand, that endangers “Western” ideology and political project. On the other hand, the terrorist, this time categorized as inhuman and subjected to irregular violence, threatens the integrity and universality of human rights and democracy. As Jean-Claude Monod argues, democracies

are obliged to protect, to a certain extent, even the presumed or proven terrorists themselves. . . . This is one of the aspects of the current problem of counterterrorism in a democracy: it is important not to underestimate or dilute this violence and the challenge it represents for humanity; but, at the same time, it is necessary to maintain a humane treatment in accordance with human rights for this enemy, which, in a sense, rejects the principle of shared humanity.⁴²

However, the moment the terrorist is categorized as an inhuman enemy, they cease to be an interlocutor with whom to negotiate peace, and war against them becomes absolute. In fact, against the terrorist, war must be waged until they are eradicated. Characterized as an inhuman criminal, as an irregular combatant, the terrorist transforms into one who by definition calls for their own eradication; against the terrorist, war must be waged until they are annihilated. Asad observes, “In a war against barbarians, the use of cruelty has always been more acceptable than it has been against civilized enemy populations. And, even today, there is no general sense of horror . . . at the numerous atrocities committed or condoned by democratic governments.”⁴³ This conceptualization frames the terrorist as such because of their own identity. It is a theory of *natural terrorism*: “According to this framework, terrorists did not necessarily commit acts of violence for any rational political purpose (as they claimed) but, rather, because of their inherently evil nature.”⁴⁴

The terrorist becomes the representation of absolute evil as well as an inexplicable evil, absent of reason(s).⁴⁵ In this way, the violence of the terrorist becomes an inhuman violence—that is, it cannot longer be recognized as an activity belonging to the Human—while extreme violence *against* the terrorist becomes the only possible solution to eradicating the absolute evil the terrorist represents. The terrorist calls into question, therefore, the framework of universal human rights, precisely because by being characterized as an enemy of Humanity, they are expelled from Humanity itself. In other words, if the war of terrorism is framed as a war against Humanity, Humanity as such then may declare war on the terrorists.

This form of analysis presents various problems, one of which is the closing off of the possibility of investigating what would motivate someone to carry out political violence. Resisting any form of empathy or comprehension toward a so-called terrorist life contributes to understanding armed conflict from a highly moralized standpoint, framing some forms of violence as illegitimate and inhumane, closing the possibilities of understanding the conflict that has been named terrorist. The questions become, How can one identify the frameworks that organize violent actions, dividing them into legitimate and illegitimate? How might one analyze how suffering triggered by these violent practices is ordered? How can one pinpoint the processes that lead to dehumanization?

The Metrics of Grievability

In seeking to answer these questions, the metrics of grievability are useful for exposing the metrics of legitimate violence and the extent to which the category of the Human functions in an excluding and exclusive way: “When a population is grievable, they can be acknowledged as a living population whose death would be grieved if that life were lost, meaning that such loss would be unacceptable, and even wrong—an occasion of a shock and outrage.”⁴⁶ The Human functions as a category to name those who can *appear* and *take place*, those who *count* and are part of the political community. Thus, within the framework that conceptualizes the inhuman-terrorist, the grievable means the Human and the Human means the grievable. Grievability, therefore, as the condition that precedes and makes possible the apprehension of a life as such,⁴⁷ has two functions: (1) it analytically reveals the mechanisms of political power that produce the concept of life and shapes the possibilities for its recognition, and (2) by revealing them, it enables the questioning of those mechanisms.

For Butler, grievability problematizes what Foucault defines as biopower. In the last seminar of “*Il faut défendre la société*” (“*Society Must Be Defended*”), Foucault defines biopower as the power of regularization which consists of “making live and letting die.”⁴⁸ Biopower completes for Foucault the form of sovereign power—that is, “to take life or let live”⁴⁹—which suggests that biopower does not replace the

sovereign power but rather penetrates and modifies it through its inverse equation.⁵⁰ Foucault questions how this power—a power that emerges through the progressive exclusion of death and has life as its objective—can at the same time let die: “How can a power such as this kill, if it is true that its basic function is to improve life, to prolong its duration, to improve its chances, to avoid accidents, and to compensate for failings? How, under these conditions, is it possible for a political power to kill, and to expose not only its enemies but its own citizens to the risk of death?”⁵¹ His argument is that through racism the right to let die is introduced in this technology of power. Racism is premised on the idea that certain populations are possessed of a common subhuman essence. In this way, race acts in hierarchical terms, since those racialized “are considered defective human beings, whose true destiny is to be enslaved, exploited or exterminated by the master race.”⁵² For Foucault, racism has two fundamental functions within biopower. First, it allows the introduction of a “break” (“coupture”) within the “biological *continuum*” that establishes races as well as a hierarchy between them.⁵³ The second is that of introducing a condition of acceptability (“la condition d’acceptabilité”)⁵⁴ to *let die*. This condition, under which the right to kill can be exercised, operates within the classic logic of “the relationship of war: ‘In order to live, you must destroy your enemies.’”⁵⁵ Racism brings this logic into play by claiming that for *us* to live, *they* must die, introducing a biological element to the logic of the warrior relationship. Thus, Foucault argues, the death of the other, the bad, the dangerous, the inferior, degenerate, or abnormal race, is understood as that which allows *us* a healthier and purer life. The political enmity acquires a biological dimension insofar as those who must be suppressed are “*threats*, either external or internal, to the population and for the population.”⁵⁶ Attributing an inferior essence to a racialized population implies denying the value of their life—and thus racism works to define grievability. Following Foucault’s distinction between sovereign power and biopower, Butler argues, “If . . . under sovereign power a subject has a right to life only on the condition that the subject is constituted as a *rights-bearing subject*, then under conditions of biopower, a population has a claim to life on the condition that the population is registered as *potentially grievable*.”⁵⁷ Yet I want to argue that the metrics of grievability works within *both* forms of power—the sovereign and biopolitical—and can help us problematize the equation of sovereign power: to let live and to kill. The differential distribution of grievability affects how and when we respond and feel “horror, guilt, *righteous sadism*, loss and indifference.”⁵⁸ Therefore, for a life to be recognized as a *grievable life*, there needs to be a set of (historically) articulated norms that “prepare and shape a subject for recognition.”⁵⁹ Grievability enables one, in this way, to query the general conditions that prepare someone’s life for recognition. A negative response to the possibility of grief signifies a hierarchy governing life’s value, allowing us to detect which lives have more weight and which do not. Thus, within biopower,

racism is the apparatus for *letting die* and grievability can help identify those lives who would not be grieved when they die because their life has no value. By contrast, within sovereign power, I posit, the apparatus for *killing* is dehumanization in its demonizing degree.

As a demonized other, the terrorist becomes therefore the target of sovereign power. Thus, we cannot think of the figure of the terrorist as “both a monster to be quarantined and an individual to be corrected,”⁶⁰ as Jasbir Puar claims. It is precisely because the terrorist has become a monster, a demonized other, that they are no longer the Other-to-Domesticate. Their existential and horrifying nature is framed as a threat both to the order and to the possibility of domestication. The terrorist can only be persecuted, destroyed, annihilated, because of their “indomitable,” “indomesticable nature.” Thus, the state’s biopower remains insufficient to act on the threat the terrorist presents.⁶¹

The terrorist today awakens what Butler understands as a “racial hysteria.”⁶² The racialized terrorist—the Arab, the Muslim terrorist—rouses vigilance over “Arab peoples and anyone who looks vaguely Arab in the dominant racial imaginary.”⁶³ This racialization, as is well known, is present in states’ profiling of those who do not belong to the political community. As Leti Volpp argues, “Race and other markers appear and reappear to patrol the borders of belonging to political communities.”⁶⁴ Fear and hatred are redirected by narratives in certain media outlets, and by politicians and rulers, concerning those individuals who represent in some way the image of the Muslim Arab as the dangerous Arab, the potentially terrorist Arab. On them falls the source of terror, for, in this framework, they represent the possibility of terror. As Edward Said wrote in his famous review of Netanyahu’s book *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*: “If you can show that Libyans, Moslems, Palestinians and Arabs, generally speaking, have no reality except that which tautologically confirms their terrorist essence as Libyans, Moslems, Palestinians and Arabs, you can go on to attack them and their ‘terrorist’ states generally, and avoid all questions about your own behavior or about your share in their present fate.”⁶⁵ Yet my proposal is that even if democratic sovereignty, “for whose legitimacy the protection of life has become absolutely central,” therefore “has more instruments at its disposal to make life unliveable than simply the exercise of brute force,” as Banu Bargu notes, it nevertheless has in its means demonizing dehumanization as a mechanism to exercise its “death-making capacity.”⁶⁶ The “terrorist” today is a key object and result of that mechanism. Understanding terrorists as the source of absolute evil, the surveillance regime around terrorism is not aimed at their correction. The goal is to arrest them indefinitely, to torture them, to kidnap them, to kill them. This is the sovereign acting and deciding who to kill rather than who to let die. It is the sovereign acting to destroy and employing its *brute force*, its “ultimate expression,”⁶⁷ as Achille Mbembe writes.

Here, grievability measures the most extreme form of ungrievability: those who will not be grieved when they die, not only because their life has no value but because their death is sought and desired. That is, the inhuman enemy is not only the one who will be “unburied” but the one who will be or become “unburiable.”⁶⁸ The unburiable is therefore the one whose death will be desired and persecuted, which corresponds to the form of sovereign power that needs dehumanization to produce the inhuman enemy and legitimate their *unburiable ungrievability*. The life of the so-called terrorist is positioned in this extreme form of ungrievability that I refer to as *forbidden grief*. This distinction also emphasizes the difference between the violence of exclusion (*a life that would not be grieved*) and the violence of persecution (*a life whose grief will be forbidden*).⁶⁹

The Paris Attack

Between the night of November 13 and the early morning of November 14, 2015, an attack took place in Paris consisting of three separate acts. In the first, three individuals detonated suicide vests in Saint-Denis in front of the Stade de France, where a soccer match was being played and the president was present. The second attack consisted of several shootings on terraces of various cafés and restaurants by three individuals. One of them detonated a suicide vest, and the other two fled. The third, the bloodiest, occurred at Bataclan, the concert hall where about 1,500 people were present. There, three individuals also undertook shootings and were killed by security forces. The Islamic State claimed responsibility for all three attacks. One hundred thirty people were killed that night and more than three hundred were wounded, including many seriously. This count (130), which was reported by most of the media outlets, does not include the seven men who died committing the attack. What does the scant representation of these people in official death tolls reveal about their grievability? In response to the attacks, the then president of France, François Hollande, in his speech at the Congress of Versailles⁷⁰ declared that France was at war. For Hollande, this was a war against a new adversary, which required, therefore, a state of emergency to confront a state of crisis. Among the measures announced (and later implemented) by Hollande was a law to remove French nationality from those with dual citizenship if they posed a terrorist threat and prevent them from returning to French territory. In addition, the law granted French authorities the power to expel foreigners who threatened the nation’s security. The president stated several times that these measures would apply even if the individual were French because, in such a case, that individual would be benefiting from French nationality. In other words, being a French citizen would not be a right but a benefit to those who were a terrorist threat.

As Garcés Mascareñas points out, promises for security entail “a progressive criminalization of immigration,”⁷¹ which can be clearly seen in the measures adopted

by France after the attack. This example shows how dehumanization and racism go hand in hand, articulating a notion of being French intertwined with access to citizenship and based on a notion of what belongs to the properly Human. A good, properly French citizen does not commit the so-named terrorist acts, and Hollande's law legalizes this ideology. In this equation, the name and surnames of the actors (Bilal Hafdi, or Brahim Abdeslam, to name two of the men that committed the attacks) become marks of origin to trace distinct genealogies that facilitate both positioning them as inhuman terrorists and rapidly expelling them from the political. Someone capable of committing such an act cannot be French or identified with the French, for this threatens the order itself that establishes being French. At the heart of this way of configuring the political, we encounter mechanisms of discrimination on the basis of what Étienne Balibar calls "anthropological differences."⁷² Those who are excluded from the political community, from belonging, and from citizenship are represented and produced "by all sorts of disciplinary or institutional mechanisms, as imperfect human beings, as 'abnormals' or monsters on the margins of humanity."⁷³ In this way, anthropological differences function as material instruments "for assigning individuals and groups to territories and regulating their circulation."⁷⁴ And it is precisely at the level of these rules "that the stranger, the pariah, the monster, the subhuman, the internal enemy, etc.," emerges.⁷⁵

The war, Hollande affirmed, was not a war between civilizations because the murderers did not represent any of them. In other words, the murderer-terrorists were barbarians, inhuman, savages. Hollande's response was a war-like response that represents very well the logic that constitutes the inhuman enemy and reproduces the framework of international terrorism's conceptualization. This response rearticulates the confrontation between Us—"the light for humanity," said Hollande—against a Them—criminal, uncivilized, inhuman. And in this confrontation, all security forces must be mobilized, borders must be closed, because "in the face of terror, France must be *strong*, it must be *great*, and the authorities of the State must be *firm*"; against terrorism, against the ideology of jihadism, France must be "unpitying" and without mercy.

The declaration of war and a state of emergency entails curtailing rights and freedoms with the promise of greater security for the Us. In some cases, as Garcés Mascareñas argues,⁷⁶ emergency measures were made permanent in law, as in the case of France, where a new antiterrorism law was passed. This declaration of a state of emergency had "become the normative basis of the right to kill."⁷⁷ Because state officials characterize the terrorist as presenting an exceptional situation, the state's answer must also be exceptional. Hollande's framing of the conflict also aimed to shape the experience and affective response of society. It opened the double identification that distinguishes the absolute inhuman enemy, creating a clear and strong line separating Us from Them. This line delimited what the community of France

represents (in this case) *and* excludes as part of its own that which the terrorist represents. Even though several of the individuals who carried out the attack were French citizens, their surnames and names facilitated their rapid expulsion from everything that a *properly* French person, a European, a democrat represented. Islamophobia contributed, in this case, to dividing the population between grievable and ungrievable lives.

As Moussa Bourekba points out, this perspective reduces a complex issue by shifting the focus to the terrorists' origins, relating—even essentializing—their identity to the propensity to commit these acts.⁷⁸ This serves to externalize the causes of attacks, positioning them *outside* the society they occur in. The problem raised by this perspective is that “it is no longer a question of questioning the society in which the individuals lived, nor their personal trajectory, but rather of focusing the debate on the role of origin as a factor of permeability to the Salafist jihadist ideology.”⁷⁹ This perspective places the perpetrator as an element external to the political community and understands their origins as the cause of their “evil,” further dehumanizing the perpetrators and associating terrorist violence with a form of violence beyond Humanity. Terrorism becomes, as we saw with Stampnitzky, a violence that should not be understood because it falls outside the frames of rationality and simply represents evil. This framework helps to situate the conflict as a conflict allowing no room for debate or understanding, only defense from and eradication. It transforms the killing of these people into “a necessary sacrifice” that “must be actively sought for.”⁸⁰ Thus, terrorist violence works as “the constitutive outside for [the] forms of violence that might reasonably be debated.”⁸¹ The killings of the bodies of those who conduct the attack will not be hidden or silenced. Their losses and deaths are celebrated.⁸²

We can see, in this way, how the ability to grieve is interrelated with the framing of suffering and how this framing forms the space of appearance: “The public will be created on the condition that certain images do not appear in the media, certain names of the dead are not utterable, certain losses are not avowed as losses.”⁸³ Furthermore, terrorist violence becomes the grounds for declaring war on countries understood as the source of this violence. In the case of France, Hollande explained the Paris attack as being planned in Syria, organized in Belgium, and perpetrated on French soil. In the same statement, he argued that Daesh is “a matter of concern to the entire international community” and, therefore, France was going to intensify its operations in Syria: “There will be no respite or truce in this action. The perpetrators of the Paris attacks must know that their crimes, far from weakening France’s resolve, strengthen our determination to destroy them.”⁸⁴

Hollande reproduced a framework of violence that reinforced and legitimized violence in the name of protecting and preserving the “international order.” Within this ideology, violence must be exercised against the barbarian

who endangers civilized nations. The declaration of sovereignty, justifying war and legitimizing killing on behalf of the population, is thus intertwined with the metrics of grievability. The framework brings to light which lives are considered politically valuable enough to carry out mobilization for war and who must die to protect the former. Furthermore, it shows how certain deaths will not qualify for obituaries or other forms of public recognition.⁸⁵ As Butler argues, the norm demarcating whose life will be grievable is “circumscribed and produced in acts of permissible and celebrated public grieving,” which, in turn, “operate in tandem with a prohibition on the public grieving of other’s lives, and how this differential allocation of grief serves the derealizing aims of military violence.”⁸⁶ The terrorist life loses the capacity to be grievable in its most absolute form because their death becomes a goal. Their lives will not only be unprotected but will also be lives that must be eliminated.

The Barcelona Attack

On August 17, 2017, Younes Abouyaaqoub drove a van down the Rambla in Barcelona, killing fourteen people and leaving more than a hundred injured. The attack lasted approximately fifty-three seconds, until the van became blocked by the accumulated bodies. In his flight, Abouyaaqoub also stabbed another person. Police shot and killed him four days later, fifty kilometers away from Barcelona. The Barcelona attack did not have the scale or the consequences of the Paris attack. The La Rambla hit-and-run and the associated August 18 Cambrils knife and axe attack were the consequence of a failed plan. The day before the attack, the house where the attackers had been assembling explosives intended for the Sagrada Familia exploded, killing two of the organizers inside.⁸⁷ What interests me in this example is the media and political response surrounding the events. Garcés Mascareñas argues that what happened in Barcelona—at least in some respects—was “a change of script.”⁸⁸ During the various demonstrations after the attack, the dominant discourse in Catalonia had “three no’s,” or three condemnations. The first was a “no to terrorism,” the condemnation of the attacks. The second was a “no to racism,” to Islamophobia. The third no was a “no to fear.” In the massive demonstration that took place on August 26 in Barcelona, the slogan repeatedly shouted by the population was “No tinc por” (“I am not afraid,” or “I have no fear”). Thus, a discourse of unity in the face of terrorism without declaring war on the enemy took place. In addition, most importantly for this analysis, the perpetrators of the attacks were recognized by some as part of the Us, as “ours.”

A social worker from Ripoll, the town where the attackers lived, wrote a public letter⁸⁹ that presented suffering from another perspective—from the perspective of those who knew firsthand the lives of the men who organized and planned the attack. In the letter, Raquel (the social worker) offers a glimpse into who these

people were: “like all children. Like my children. . . . Like the one you can see playing in the square, or the one who carried a huge backpack of books.” The letter asked what led the men to undertake the attacks and what *we* are doing wrong (a self-referential “we” that addresses the society in which these men lived). The goal was to transmit openly the pain that, as she points out, “does not appear in the newspapers” and is forbidden. Raquel wanted to share “the other side of the coin . . . , the one that does not cry in public, the one that silently holds back tears because it seems that it is frowned upon to cry for them.” In her letter, Raquel indirectly raises the question of the lives that cannot be mourned and questions the frameworks that present the violence of these acts and differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate suffering. The terrorist does not deserve to be mourned, for they represent the prohibition par excellence of the grievable life. Their death is a necessary and justified death. However, Raquel’s familiarity with this group disrupted and interrupted—at least partly—the order that framed their lives as ungrievable. By reclaiming grieving for the ungrieved, Raquel was doing something more than demanding a mere inclusion of the ungrieved within the grieved. The claim for protesting forbidden grief is not just a form of resistance against the state’s power, it is crucially a claim for transforming the understanding of the political in antagonistic terms. It denies the friend/enemy divide.⁹⁰ Using Bonnie Honig’s words, I posit that the claim for grieving those whose grief has been forbidden becomes “a politics of counter-sovereignty that emphasizes equality in life.”⁹¹

Because the allocation of grievability is not “natural or inexorable; all are historically and culturally contingent,” “any determinate order has the potential to be contested.”⁹² Raquel opened a space, even if small, to question the illusion of whose life is worthy of living and being protected, as well as to question who belongs to the political community. Thus, what we can see in this case is how the perpetrators’ deaths fall into two contrasting frames. While some experience loss and the need to mourn their deaths, for others the perpetrators’ acts render it impossible to grieve their deaths. This confrontation brings to light the metrics of grievability in which only those deaths considered losses can be publicly mourned. In this sense, what does and does not count as a grievable life is a political question. Grievability, as I have previously suggested, exposes the way in which “different deaths are hierarchically ranked and how those deaths figure, if at all, in public discourse.”⁹³ Yet grievability also brings to light which lives matter; it highlights “who is deemed fully—that is meaningfully—human, in the specific sense of having a life judged worthy of value, support and protection.”⁹⁴ Precisely because grievability is not about “*how* we mourn, but *who* we mourn (and do not mourn),” it signals “who belongs and which lives matter in political communities.”⁹⁵ That is, it reveals who counts as a political subject.

Despite the promises the response provided, it did not have the necessary power to transform those narratives and mechanisms for cohabitation in the village of Ripoll, where the attackers resided. After the attacks, expressions of hatred against Islam also grew significantly—Garcés Mascareñas cites as an example how the hashtag #StopIslam became a trending topic during those days.⁹⁶ Six years later, in June 2023, the president of the far-right (and racist) party Catalan Alliance, Silvia Orriols, won the elections and became mayor of Ripoll.

Nevertheless, the case helps me illustrate how reclaiming grief for those whose grief has been forbidden opens a demand, following Derrida, of the unconditional. This demand cannot be completely satisfied, and yet it provides an ethical and political framework to demand responsibility from the political community and to question the demonization of the terrorist that presents them as those with whom cohabitation cannot take place.

How to Grieve a Terrorist Life?

As I finished preparing this article for submission, Hamas launched its attack in Israel on October 7, 2023, and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) unleashed an explosion of violence against the Palestinians of Gaza. The Palestinian paramilitary group began its assault by launching around three thousand rockets before, in a series of coordinated armed incursions, fighters affiliated with Hamas and other militant groups broke through the barrier separating Gaza from Israel, attacking military bases and civilian targets, including kibbutz settlements and attendees at the Nova music festival in the Gaza Envelope of southern Israel. Hamas defended the attack as a response to the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, and the increased violence by Israeli settlers in the West Bank. The attackers killed more than 1,100 people, mostly civilians, and took around 240 civilians and soldiers hostage.⁹⁷

On October 7 the state of Israel, supported by other Western democratic states, announced a state-of-war alert in the name of self-defense, freeing the hostages, and the eradication of terrorist violence. Immediately following the attacks, the IDF began air strikes on the Gaza Strip, and a day later, Israel declared itself to be at war. On October 9, the government ordered a complete siege of the Gaza Strip, cutting off water, electricity, and access to food and fuel to the entire population, with Israeli defense minister Yoav Gallant stating, “We are imposing a complete siege on [Gaza]. No electricity, no food, no water, no fuel—everything is closed. We are fighting *human animals*, and we act accordingly.”⁹⁸ Israel’s announced objective was to wipe out Hamas and destroy its subterranean tunnel infrastructure. The IDF has since bombed all forms of infrastructure in Gaza, including residences, hospitals, ambulances, schools, churches, mosques, killing—to date—more than forty-one thousand Palestinians.⁹⁹ At the time of writing, 1.9 million Palestinians (90 percent

of Gaza)¹⁰⁰ have been internally displaced, Gaza is at imminent risk of famine, and Israel has almost entirely cut off the flow of humanitarian and medical aid into the Strip. UN secretary general António Guterres announced, “This is the highest number of people facing catastrophic hunger ever recorder by the Integrated Food Security Classification system—anywhere, anytime. . . . This is an entirely man-made disaster.”¹⁰¹ At the same time, Israel and state-backed settlers have been using the ongoing war in Gaza to extend and intensify the ongoing illegal occupation of the West Bank.¹⁰²

The rhetorical response from Israeli officials perfectly embodies how the inhuman enemy is constructed, while the military actions of the IDF demonstrates its devastating consequences.¹⁰³ Closely echoing Hollande’s rhetoric, the prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, stated on October 16, 2023, in response to Hamas’s attack: “This is a struggle between *the children of light* and the *children of darkness*, between humanity and the law of the jungle.”¹⁰⁴ On the October 9, when Netanyahu declared that Israel was at war, he claimed that Hamas terrorists were “savages,” they were “ISIS”: “And just as *the forces of civilization* united to defeat ISIS, the forces of civilization must support Israel in defeating Hamas.” In fighting Hamas, “Israel is not only fighting for its own people. It is fighting for every country that stands against *barbarism*. Israel will win this war, and *when Israel wins, the entire civilized world wins*.”¹⁰⁵ On October 15, 2023, during the first meeting of the national emergency government in Tel Aviv, Netanyahu asserted that Israeli soldiers were fighting “*bloodthirsty monsters* who seek to annihilate us.”¹⁰⁶

In the immediate wake of the attack, members of the Israeli government have extended dehumanizing language to Palestinians in general to justify the massacre of civilian populations. President Isaac Herzog claimed on October 12, 2023: “It’s an entire nation out there that is responsible. It’s not true this rhetoric about civilians not aware not involved. It’s absolutely not true . . . and we will fight until we break their backbone.”¹⁰⁷ Such sentiment was echoed by far-right members of the government. Israeli minister of national security Itamar Ben-Gvir stated, “To be clear, when we say that Hamas should be destroyed, it also means those who celebrate, those who support, and those who hand out candy—they’re all terrorists, and they should also be destroyed.” Likewise, the Israeli Minister of Heritage, Amichai Eliyahu, declared on November 1, 2023, “There is no such thing as uninvolved civilians in Gaza”; and the Israeli army reservist major general and former head of the Israeli National Security Council Giora Eiland asked, “Who are the ‘poor’ women of Gaza? *They are all the mothers, sisters or wives of Hamas murderers*.”¹⁰⁸ These sentiments categorize and frame Hamas, together with the Palestinian population, as terrorists (or potentially terrorist, or complicit in terrorism) and thus a necessary target to eradicate.¹⁰⁹

The official Israeli response thus provides an exemplary case of the processes depicted in this article. The notion of the terrorist is here a tool for exercising sovereign power—that is, the power of the state to decide who needs to be annihilated in the name of protecting and preserving the order (Democracy, Civilization, Humanity). And to exercise this power, I have argued, a democratic state needs the apparatus of dehumanization in its most extreme degree: demonization. The inhuman enemy needs to be the “source of absolute terror.”¹¹⁰ This process of demonizing the terrorist and placing them outside the Human has a concrete political goal. It enables the state to frame part of a population not only as unworthy of protection but as killable, annihilable, reinforcing in turn the state’s sovereignty.

The constitution of the terrorist is, in this way, an attempt at depoliticization. Forty-five years after the Netanyahu’s conference on terrorism, whose central political goal was to popularize a notion of international terrorism in order to delegitimize Palestinian political aspiration,¹¹¹ the notion of necessary unrestrained war against the terrorist is being deployed to attempt to suppress discussion of anything other than a massively violent response to the October attacks. Since October 7, a clear example of this suppression of debate can be also found in Germany, for example, where expressions of solidarity and grieving for the Palestinian people have been banned and criminalized in multiple ways.¹¹²

When state actors categorize violence as terrorist violence, they seek to exclude them from the realm of the political, denying them the possibility of reconfiguring the established order. Presented as a radical threat, the terrorist works to signal those who need to be not only expelled from the frames of the political but eliminated *without mercy* and, I have claimed, without the possibility of grief. At the same time, the attempt to frame Palestinian lives as ungrievable has been highly contested by activists, governments, and the media. This contestation reinforces my argument. The framework that Israel, together with many other democratic states, have attempted to impose is being forcefully broken not only because the attack in the name of “self-defense” has been grossly disproportionate but also because it has been an attack primarily against civilians. Furthermore, unlike the IS, the classification of Hamas as a terrorist group is more contested, with commentators frequently providing and demanding contextualization of the attack. Hamas is not recognized as a terrorist group by the United Nations, and only Argentina, Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, Paraguay, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union classify Hamas as such. Moreover, Hamas is also understood as a resistance movement against the ongoing Israeli occupation. Thus, the response to the violence in Gaza is subtly distinct from the response to the Barcelona attack. In the Barcelona case, the violence is unquestionably understood by all parties as terrorist violence, while the grievability of the involved terrorists is contested. In the case of Gaza, there is (at least) a twofold tension. First, there is a

debate over whether Hamas are terrorists in the first place; second, even for those who consider Hamas terrorists, there is pushback over the framing of Palestinian lives as terrorist or complicit in terrorism.¹¹³

The events and responses analyzed in this article open up, therefore, the perspectives on how our frames “for thinking the human set limits to the kind of losses we can view as loss.”¹¹⁴ Characterized as inhuman, the terrorist’s threat must be destroyed to protect the community and its values, for the community’s survival. *In order to live, you must destroy your enemies*—and “the death of the other [in this case of the inhuman other] is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer.”¹¹⁵ Positioned as external to what constitutes the Human, the phenomenon of terrorism is characterized, therefore, as belonging to another order. Furthermore, if the terrorist represents a nonfamilial other, the racial schema further facilitates this response.

Making the terrorist ungrievable implies cutting all ties of interrelationship with the terrorist and to erase their past. It hinders the possibility of thinking and understanding the phenomenon of which they are a part, thus facilitating violence against them and prohibiting (public) suffering for them. Not marking the deaths of those who commit attacks is a way of expelling them from society’s responsibility to analyze and understand how or why a group of people commit and participate in those forms of violence (if they participated at all). This process is intertwined with the categorization of their violence as “irrational,” “inhuman,” “barbaric,” or “monstrous”—a mechanism that expels the so-called terrorists’ actions from the frame of the Human. Such actions and individuals remain in a realm where comprehension cannot take place, for they do not belong to it. The terrorist therefore cannot be grieved.¹¹⁶

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Notes

1. As Ghassan Hage notes, “The fact that terrorist groups never classify themselves as terrorists, instead calling themselves revolutionaries, martyrs, nationalists, or freedom fighters, is an indication of the depth of this symbolic violence” (“‘Comes a Time,’” 72).
2. Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror*, 109.
3. Lisa Stampnitzky speaks of “outside” the laws of war, but I would like to make a distinction between the actions that are done *outside* the law, which could be situated within the realm of *alegality*, and the actions that are done *against* the law, which will belong to the realm of *illegality*. I want to argue that the narratives that frame the terrorist threat position it within this second realm, enabling, at the same time, the conceptualization of the terrorist as an *illegitimate* actor. The law decrees everything that does not recognize the law to be violent, thereby exercising the decisive power of distinguishing between legal and illegal violence. As Walter Benjamin astutely points out in *Toward the Critique of Violence*, the legal system’s monopoly on violence “vis-à-vis the individual” is due not so much to an intention “of preserving legal ends, but rather of *preserving law itself*. [This is the possibility] that violence, when it does not lie in the hands of law, poses a danger to law, not by virtue of the ends that it may pursue but by virtue of its mere existence outside of law” (42; “Dagegen wird man vielleicht die überraschende Möglichkeit in Betracht zu ziehen haben, daß das Interesse des Rechts an der Monopolisierung der Gewalt gegenüber der Einzelperson sich nicht durch die Absicht erkläre, die Rechtszwecke, sondern vielmehr durch die, das Recht selbst zu wahren. Daß die Gewalt, wo sie nicht in den Händen des jeweiligen Rechtes liegt, ihm Gefahr droht, nicht durch die Zwecke, welche sie erstreben mag, sondern durch ihr bloßes Dasein außerhalb des Rechts,” Benjamin, *Zur Kritik der Gewalt*, 183).
4. Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror*, 4.
5. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 17. On the development of terrorism’s conceptualization, see Stampnitzky’s insightful analysis in *Disciplining Terror*.
6. Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror*, 4.
7. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 34.
8. Butler, *Force of Nonviolence*, 116.
9. See Butler, *Frames of War*.
10. In *What World Is This?* Butler explains this point: “Of course, a smaller group may grieve a loss with intensity and duration, but the loss and the mourning do not show up on the dominant radars tracking human value” (89).
11. I am using *overrepresentation* in Sylvia Wynter’s sense. “Man,” Wynter writes, “overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself” (“Unsettling the Coloniality,” 260). As Jasbir Puar explains, for Wynter “Man” is the overrepresentation *as if it were the human*—that is, the human is “representationally overdetermined by one *genre* of human” (*Right to Maim*, 29). This means that the Human is defined on the basis of a particular genre, what Wynter calls “Man,” which becomes the absolute representation of “the human species as a whole, rather than as it is veridically: that of the Western and westernized (or conversely) global middle classes” (Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality,” 313).

12. See Livingstone Smith, *Making Monsters*; Livingstone Smith, *On Inhumanity*.
13. Kristeva, *Strangers*, 187; “La rencontre avec l’autre — que nous percevons par la vue, l’ouïe, l’odorat, mais n’encadrons pas par la conscience” (*Étrangers*, 276).
14. Livingstone Smith, *Making Monsters*, 240–50; my emphasis.
15. Echoing Sylvia Wynter’s “Man” in “Unsettling the Coloniality,” I write *Human* with capital H.
16. Livingstone Smith, *Making Monsters*, 251.
17. Livingstone Smith, *Making Monsters*, 250.
18. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 41; my emphasis.
19. Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, 29.
20. Rech, “Naming of Evil,” 86.
21. For the purpose and scope of this article, the framework remains anthropocentric. However, this hierarchization of life should be thought beyond the relationship among human animals.
22. Livingstone Smith, *Making Monsters*, 32.
23. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 4.
24. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 89.
25. Jamshidi, “Instruments of Dehumanization.”
26. Jamshidi, “Instruments of Dehumanization.” Another conference took place in 1984, when Netanyahu published the edited book *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*, which, as Jamshidi notes, “played a major role in helping these views take hold within the U.S. political scene.”
27. Howe and Pégrier, “In/humanidad,” 137; my translation.
28. Howe and Pégrier, “In/humanidad,” 130; my translation.
29. This conceptualization of the terrorist as absolute evil is already present in the conceptualization of the legal epithet *hostis humani generis*. As Steven Howe and Clotilde Pégrier explain, this figure represents the “one whose actions betray a fundamental hostility to the laws of humanity and who is thus banished from conventional legal protections” (“In/humanidad,” 124).
30. Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 14.
31. Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*, 32.
32. Greene, “Hostis Humani Generis,” 693–94.
33. Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror*, 169.
34. Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*, 35.
35. As Asad points out, it seems, then, that it is not so much the cruelty of terrorism that matters, nor the threat to a way of life, “but their civilizational status. What is really a stake is . . . the fight of civilization against the uncivilized” (*On Suicide Bombing*, 38).
36. See Cavarero, *Horrorism*.
37. See Howe and Pégrier, “In/humanidad.”
38. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 51.
39. Rech, “Naming of Evil,” 86.
40. Bush, “State of the Union.”
41. See the analysis of Jean-Claude Monod, *Penser l’ennemi*.
42. Monod, *Penser l’ennemi*, 171; my translation;

Les démocraties, de leur côté, sont tenues de protéger dans une certaine mesure jusqu’aux terroristes présumés ou avérés eux-mêmes. C’est un des aspects du problème actuel du contre-terrorisme en démocratie: il importe de ne pas sous-estimer ou diluer cette violence et le défi qu’elle représente pour l’humanité; mais, en même temps, il s’agit

de maintenir un traitement humain et conforme aux droits de l'homme pour cet ennemi qui, en un sens, rejette le principe d'humanité partagée.

43. Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*, 34.
44. Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror*, 108. This language of "evil" was very present in George W. Bush's speeches "throughout the war on terror." Stampnitzky cites a tally that shows how Bush used the word "evil" more than one thousand times in his speeches, of which 914 as a noun, and only 182 as an adjective. See also the analysis that Butler offers about Michael Walzer's classification of terrorism as a form of violence not worth debating, explaining, or justifying (*Frames of War*, 152–54). In a footnote, Butler understands Walzer's response after 9/11 as an anti-intellectual response, "when he argued that we should make no room for those who seek to understand the reasons for the attacks on US" (*Frames of War*, 153). This anti-intellectual response resonates strongly in our present time.
45. Stampnitzky explains how as a result of the increase in suicide bombing, the narrative about the irrationality of the terrorist expanded and has been widely reproduced (see *Disciplining Terror*, 144–45). Suicide bombing becomes, therefore, an example of the way in which the frames of violence function. As Ghassan Hage points out, "The fact that we approach suicide bombing with such trepidation, in contrast to how we approach the violence of colonial domination, for example, indicates the symbolic violence that shapes our understanding of what constitutes ethically and politically illegitimate violence" ("Comes a Time," 72).
46. Butler, *Force of Nonviolence*, 108.
47. See Butler, *Frames of War*.
48. See Foucault, "Il faut défendre la société," 220: "Et voilà que maintenant apparaît un pouvoir que j'appellerais de régularisation, qui consiste . . . à faire vivre et à laisser mourir." English translation: "Society Must Be Defended," 247.
49. Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," 241.
50. See Butler, *Force of Nonviolence*, 108–12.
51. Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," 254; Comment un pouvoir comme celui-là peut-il tuer, s'il est vrai qu'il s'agit essentiellement de majorer la vie, d'en prolonger la durée, d'en multiplier les chances, d'en détourner les accidents, ou bien d'en compenser les déficits? Comment, dans ces conditions, est-il possible, pour un pouvoir politique, de tuer, de réclamer la mort, de demander la mort, de faire tuer, de donner l'ordre de tuer, d'exposer à la mort non seulement ses ennemis mais même ses propres citoyens? (Foucault, "Il faut défendre la société," 226–27).
52. Livingstone Smith, *On Inhumanity*, 50.
53. Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," 254–55; 1997, 227.
54. Foucault, "Il faut défendre la société," 228.
55. Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," 255; "La relation guerrière: 'pour vivre, il faut bien que tu massacres tes ennemis'" ("Il faut défendre la société," 227).
56. Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended," 256; my emphasis; "Les dangers, externes ou internes, par rapport à la population et pour la populations," ("Il faut défendre la société," 228).
57. Butler, *Force of Nonviolence*, 115–16; my emphasis.
58. Butler, *Frames of War*, 24; my emphasis.
59. Butler, *Frames of War*, 5.
60. Puar and Rai, "Monster, Terrorist, Fag," 121. See also Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 37–38.
61. This is not to say that governmentality is absent from state policy around terrorism, which monitors, studies, and seeks to control those who might be or become a terrorist.

62. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 36. See also Jasbir Puar's analysis on the production of the Muslim body as an object of torture and the relationship between torture and sexuality in the case Abu Ghraib (*Terrorist Assemblages*, 82–88).
63. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 36.
64. Volpp, "Citizen and the Terrorist," 1595.
65. Said, "Essential Terrorist," 199.
66. Bargu, *Turkey's Necropolitical Laboratory*, 3–4.
67. Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, 66.
68. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 34.
69. See Rogozinski, *Ils m'ont haï sans raison*.
70. Hollande, "Déclaration."
71. Garcés Mascareñas, "17A," 22.
72. Balibar, *Citizenship*, 15.
73. Balibar, *Citizenship*, 16.
74. Balibar, *Citizenship*, 69.
75. Balibar, *Citizenship*, 70.
76. Garcés Mascareñas, "17A."
77. Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, 69.
78. See Bourekba, "Atentados de Barcelona."
79. Bourekba, "Atentados de Barcelona," 9.
80. Becerril Aceves, "Frames," 102.
81. Butler, *Frames of War*, 154.
82. In relation to the Charlie Hebdo attacks, Osman Balkar offers an insightful analysis on the politics of mourning and the management of corpses as "a means of sovereign governance," distinguishing between three distinct forms of mourning that were at work in the funeral ceremonies held both for the victims as well as the perpetrators. See Balkan, "Charlie Hebdo," 253–68.
83. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 37–38.
84. Hollande, "Déclaration"; my translation; "Et il n'y aura dans cette action aucun répit et aucune trêve. Les commanditaires des attentats de Paris doivent savoir que leurs crimes, loin de faire vaciller la résolution de la France, renforcent encore notre détermination à les détruire."
85. Lloyd, "Naming the Dead."
86. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 37.
87. For an analysis of what happen in Barcelona and Cambrils, see Reinares and García-Calvo, "Un análisis de los atentados terroristas."
88. Garcés Mascareñas, "17A," 23.
89. The letter was published in *El país* on August 22, 2017; see Cantó, "'¿Cómo puede ser, Younes?'"
90. James Martel analyzes this question in relation to Bonnie Honig and Judith Butler's analyses of Sophocles's *Antigone*. See Martel, *Unburied Bodies*, 43–65.
91. Honig, *Antigone, Interrupted*, 10.
92. Lloyd, "Naming the Dead," 270.
93. Lloyd, "Naming the Dead," 261.
94. Lloyd, "Naming the Dead," 261.
95. Balkan, "Charlie Hebdo," 256. I disagree, though, with Balkan's analysis of Butler's grievability. Balkan implies that grievability does not show how the regulation of mourning

targets both the dead and the living. He states: “Mourning becomes politicized precisely because it can be mobilized to bolster or subvert state objectives” (256). Yet, for Butler, grievability is precisely the operator that signals those lives that would not be grieved in the future anterior, and therefore it explicitly regards those alive and the status of their lives while being lived.

96. See Garcés Mascareñas, “17A.”
97. See Bourekba’s report “Las tres consecuencias,” 1.
98. Gallant, “We Are Imposing.”
99. The Johns Hopkins University Center for Humanitarian Health and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine have published projections of Palestinian deaths from February to August 2024 under different possible scenarios. “Even if a ceasefire begins immediately, the researchers project between 6,550 and 11,580 more people will still die over the next six months” (Chotiner, “The Humanitarian Catastrophe”).
100. See OCHA, “Reported Impact Snapshot.”
101. See UN News, “Imminent Famine.”
102. See, for example, Beaumont, “UN Demands End.”
103. Numerous examples of dehumanizing rhetoric and expressions of genocidal intent against the Palestinian people have been documented by the State of South Africa in their submission to the International Court of Justice. See “Application Instituting Proceedings,” 59–67.
104. See Netanyahu, “Excerpt from PM Netanyahu’s Remarks”; my emphasis.
105. See Netanyahu, “Statement”; my emphasis.
106. See Prime Minister’s Office, “PM Netanyahu Asks Ministers”; my emphasis.
107. See Omaar, “Israeli President.”
108. These three statements can be found in South Africa’s report to the International Court of Justice. See “Application Instituting Proceedings,” 61–64.
109. Since October 2023 there have been some of the clearest instances of dehumanization being used to justify and legalize genocidal violence, resulting in atrocious consequences. See, for example, Francesca Albanese’s report “Anatomy of a Genocide,” UN Human Rights Council, 55th sess., A/HRC/55/73, February 26–April 5, 2024, <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/anatomy-genocide-report-special-rapporteur-situation-human-rights-palestinian-territories-occupied-1967-francesca-albanese-ahrc5573-advance-unedited-version>. As Pankaj Mishra said, “In recent months, billions of people around the world have witnessed an extraordinary onslaught whose victims, as Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh, an Irish lawyer who is South Africa’s representative at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, put it, ‘are broadcasting their own destruction in real time in the desperate, so far vain, hope that the world might do something’” (“Shoah after Gaza”).
110. Marchart, “Other Side of Order,” 109.
111. See Jamshidi, “Instruments of Dehumanization.”
112. The cases are numerous. For some examples, see Sappir, “Spiralling Absurdity.”
113. There is an added complexity to this case, one that goes beyond the scope of this article, due to the category of antisemitism, a concept that also informs grievability in political and media narratives. Even more so since October 7, in many places antisemitism has become almost synonymous with criticisms of Israel or solidarity with Palestinians. As Pankaj Mishra points out in “The Shoah after Gaza,”
Anyone calling attention to the spectacle of Washington’s blind commitment to Israel is accused of antisemitism and ignoring the lessons of the Shoah. And a distorted consciousness of the Shoah ensures that whenever the victims of Israel, unable to

endure their misery any longer, rise up against their oppressors with predictable ferocity, they are denounced as Nazis, hellbent on perpetrating another Shoah.

114. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 32.
115. Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” 255.
116. The normative claim implicit in this article should not be understood as a claim to reinclude the terrorist in Humanity or the Human. Claiming their Humanity will imply reproducing the framework that allows to think the Human/Inhuman divide in the first place. What is necessary is rather to dismantle the grammar that constitutes the terrorist. The metrics of grievability make precisely that possible. The actor labeled as a terrorist needs to become grievable in order to become comprehensible, legible, contextualizable—in order to become political.

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