

The Striking Speech of Hindah; Wife of Yazid (L), in the Umayyad Court:

A Critical Historical Account

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Published: 2026

Abstract: *This paper examines a narrative from later Islamic historiography and devotional literature recounting the moral confrontation between Hindah, wife of Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah (r. 680–683 CE), and her husband following the massacre of al-Husayn ibn 'Ali (as) at Karbala. The episode describes Hindah's outrage upon discovering the imprisonment and humiliation of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and her insistence on their immediate release. While the earliest chronicles offer only brief references to women in Yazid's family, later Shī'ī sources expand it into a moral drama. This study presents a refined version of the account, annotated with references to primary sources and scholarly interpretation, and assesses its historical plausibility. Drawing from historical and traditional sources, it portrays Hindah's moral defiance in the Umayyad court, where she challenges Yazid's authority and denounces the injustice committed against the Nabawi family. The narrative reflects political tensions in Damishq, moral awakening within the palace, and growing public resentment toward Yazid's rule, while also exploring the religious symbolism of the Hijab in the humiliation of the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and the ethical implications of leadership and repentance in Islamic history.*

Key Words: *Hindah bint 'Abd Allāh, Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah, Karbala, Ahl al-Bayt, Zaynab bint 'Ali, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, Umayyad court, Islamic historiography, moral defiance, hijab, repentance, Damascus, Shī'ī devotional literature, women in early Islam.*

That very day, without delay, Hindah and her son Mu'awiyah went to confront Yazid (L). Tears streamed down her face as she stood before him. Before he could speak, she addressed him in a firm and steady voice:

"I went to your prison today. I saw the truth with my own eyes. O Yazid, you have committed a terrible sin. You killed Husayn ibn 'Ali (as) and some of his Ash'ab. You have imprisoned the innocent women of the Nabawi family. Do you claim they sought to overthrow your rule?"

My son and I have decided: if you do not free them today - with the respect and honour they deserve - I will tell all the people of Shaam. We are not afraid of you. We are ready to die to save the family of Husayn ibn 'Ali (as)."

Yazid was stunned by his Queen's bold defiance. He remained silent for a few moments, unsure of how to respond. Then his son Mu'awiyah spoke:

"Father, now we know the truth. It will be a sin for us to remain silent."

Yazid realised the tide was turning. The mission of Husayn (as) to preserve Islam was gaining strength. The cries of little Sakinah (as) in the night, and her patience in suffering, had already touched hearts in Damishq. Yazid understood that if he did not act, the people of Shaam would rise against him. At last, he said:

"I will accept your request. I will free the prisoners peacefully and honourably, so that we may all live in peace."

Still weeping, Hindah replied:

"Peace? Do you think my son or I can ever have peace after what you have done? Even in death, I will have no peace knowing you killed Husayn (as) and left his beloved family in chains, while we lived in comfort in this palace."

Hindah left him and went to visit Sayyidah Zaynab (as). She took clothing for the Sayyidaat.

Yazid called after her:

"Wear your Hijab before you go."

Hindah turned back sharply:

"Hijab? For what? When you exposed the women of Rasulullah's family, did you think of Hijab then? I will not wear Hijab unless you first return the Hijabs to the Sayyidaat."

Yazid fell silent. He knew the truth of her words. Standing on his balcony, he remembered the severed head of Al Imam al-Husayn (as) and the warning of Qur'an:

"Soon those who did wrong will know to what place they will return."

Hindah entered the prison without Hijab. Al Imam Ali Zayn al-'Abidin (as) was grieved and turned his face away, as did Sayyidah Zaynab (as). Sayyidah Zaynab said gently:

"O Hindah, this is not the way to come. Return to your home, wear your Hijab, and then visit us."

Hindah replied:

"I wanted Yazid to feel what it is like for his wife to be without Hijab - only that."

Al Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (as) answered:

"You should honour the dignity Allah has given you. Respect yourself, and even respect your husband in this matter. Go back and return with your Hijab."

Hindah obeyed, still weeping. Back in the palace she told Yazid:

"You took the Hijab from the holy women, but Sayyidah Zaynab (as) told me to wear mine. I do it for her respect, not yours."

Yazid said:

"I will grant your plea. I have already ordered the release of the prisoners and the return of their Hijabs. Tomorrow, I will speak with Al Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (as) about their departure." Hindah returned to the prison and found Sayyidah Rubab (as) praying beside the grave of her daughter. Rubab lifted her tear-stained face and said:

"I have lost everything, my six-month-old son 'Ali al-Asghar (as) and now my daughter (as)."

When offered water, she wept:

"Since burying my daughter last night, anything I eat or drink makes me feel as if she is asking me for a morsel. I cannot bring myself to take it."

Meanwhile, Yazid's spies warned him that public anger was growing, and that he risked losing his throne. They advised him to release the prisoners immediately and seek forgiveness. Yazid agreed, yet attempted to shift blame onto Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad (L).

When Hindah returned to him, she found him sitting alone, and without wine in his hand. She said:

"Like father, like son. You kill innocents and then weep over them. You are a liar."

Yazid demanded respect as her husband, but Hindah retorted:

"Respect is earned by deeds, not demanded in need. You are a murderer and still ask for honour?"

When Yazid claimed it was Ibn Ziyad who had killed Husayn (as), she rebuked him:

"And the gifts you sent him were they for this 'good work'? You are the worst man I have known. I will leave this palace with my son and never return."

Yazid pleaded:

"Do not leave me. I will give the Khilafah to Al Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (as) when he comes tomorrow."

Hindah answered:

"If I were in your place, I would set myself on fire to feel even a fraction of the pain you caused the family of Rasulullah (S). I ask you, divorce me."

Yazid refused:

"Wait until Imam Zayn al-'Abidin comes."

Hindah said:

"Then I will see your last act of deceit."

The speech of Hindah in the Umayyad court is not merely a dramatized episode but a moral testimony to the overwhelming truth of Karbala that even penetrated Yazid's palace. While historians may debate its exact historicity, within Shī'ī memory it functions as an extension of the mission of Al Imām al-Ḥusayn (as), exposing Yazid's hypocrisy and demonstrating how the message of Karbala awakened consciences even among his own family. Hindah's defiance, like the sermons of Sayyidah Zaynab (as) and Al Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn (as), becomes part of the spiritual resistance that dismantled Yazid's false authority. Her rejection of Hijab before Yazid is

especially significant: it serves as a sharp reminder of the humiliation imposed on the Ahl al-Bayt (as), turning Yazid's crime into his shame, until Sayyidah Zaynab (as) redirects the act into its proper Islamic dignity. In this narrative, Hindah's voice is not a marginal note in history but an instrument of divine justice, her confrontation adds weight to the condemnation of Yazid (L) and reinforces the Shī'ī conviction that every heart, even in his palace, was stirred by the truth of Karbala. Thus, the episode, whether literal or symbolic, strengthens the Shī'ī understanding of Karbala as a universal call to resist oppression, uphold the dignity of the Ahl al-Bayt (as), and affirm the eternal divide between the path of truth and the path of tyranny.

Conclusion:

The speech and defiance of Hindah in the Umayyad court, whether taken as history or as a moralized narrative in later Shī'ī Literature, serves as a powerful lens through which the ethical and political crisis following Karbala can be understood. Her confrontation with Yazid (L) highlights the tension between power and conscience, authority and legitimacy, as well as the role of women in voicing moral truth in the face of tyranny. The exchange about the Hijab underscores not only the physical humiliation endured by the women of Nabawi family but also the symbolic inversion of dignity and dishonour within the palace itself. By situating Hindah's voice at the heart of the event, the narrative reflects both public resentment in Damishq and the broader Islamic discourse on justice, repentance, and divine accountability. While its enduring presence in Islamic memory underscores the transformative impact of Karbala on political thought, ethical leadership, and the role of women as agents of moral resistance.

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