



Passengers Face Death During Struggle in Flydubai Cockpit

The Wired Word **for the Week of October 11, 2026**

In the News

The late-September flight from Dubai to Tel Aviv seemed to be hitting a patch of turbulence over the desert of Saudi Arabia. But then the passengers of Flight 1073 heard screams, and they realized that they were facing real danger. The shouts were coming from near the cockpit, said passenger Adam Polovincik to *The New York Times*. "We tried to be 'cool' for our kids."

Suddenly, the Flydubai 737 aircraft took a dive and the overhead bins popped open. The passengers, mostly Israeli, felt pinned to their seats. Luggage flew around the cabin, and people began to scream and pray. The plane plunged 16,625 feet in a little over 30 seconds, according to *The Guardian*, causing part of the rudder to be ripped off.

Many of the roughly 180 people aboard the plane felt that they were facing death. "I don't deserve to die like this," said one passenger. Another turned to her two daughters and partner and told them that she loved them.

Although not clear to most of the passengers, there was a bloody struggle going on in the cockpit, as one pilot was attacking the other in an effort to crash the plane. Fortunately, intervention by passengers and crew members saved the day, and the plane landed safely in Saudi Arabia. As the attack unfolded, six men rushed to the cockpit, where they found one pilot badly injured. Although he had been stabbed, the injured pilot managed to open the cockpit door, allowing the men to enter. They overcame the co-pilot, who was holding an axe, and tied his hands with headphone cables. Passenger Assaf Rajuan said that he and the others "neutralized him very quickly."

Two off-duty British reserve pilots who were sitting in the passenger cabin went to the cockpit, took control of the plane, and landed it safely. A passenger who was trained as a dentist treated the injured pilot in the air, caring for severe wounds to his head and cuts on his fingers.

"I thank God," said passenger Rajuan to *The Times of Israel*, "and everybody who helped" them to survive the incident, stressing that he did not act alone. "Life is stronger than everything, and we decided to fight for it," he said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel identified the injured pilot as Captain Smit Machchhar, an Indian citizen. "Despite being stabbed and seriously injured," said Netanyahu, "he fought back, resisted, opened the cockpit door and enabled passengers and

crew to overpower the attacker -- preventing a catastrophic midair disaster."

"I was lying on the floor injured but I told myself to go for one last push to open the door from inside," said Machchhar in a video call after the incident. "Others came in and also played a role [in controlling the situation]. I was of course fighting for my own life, but at the same time I knew I was not going to let others die."

Israel's minister of culture thanked the Saudi authorities for their role in helping the Israeli passengers after they landed in Saudi Arabia. "God willing, may peace come to us," he added. Israel and Saudi Arabia do not currently maintain diplomatic relations.

Following the incident, Israeli sources told *CNN* that the co-pilot accused of attacking Captain Machchhar probably acted alone. International investigators are still working to determine a motive. Both Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where Flydubai is based, are investigating the incident, as is the Interior Ministry of Saudi Arabia.

The attorney general of the UAE, Hamad Saif Al Shamsi, said the co-pilot attempted to seize control of the plane by attacking his colleague with a crash axe -- a piece of equipment required on most aircraft. He called the attempted hijacking a "terrorist act." Netanyahu told *Fox News* that Israel understands that the suspect "underwent Islamist radical indoctrination," based on

information collected during questioning. The co-pilot is being held and questioned in the UAE.

CNN has learned that the suspect, Hamam al-Hammami, is an Omani national who had been removed from a previous job at Oman's national airline in 2025 following concerns about his extremist views. Questions remain about how a citizen of Oman, a country without formal diplomatic relations with Israel, was authorized to co-pilot a plane to Tel Aviv. Flydubai's flights between Dubai and Tel Aviv have been suspended until further notice following the attack.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Bloody Attack in the Cockpit of a Flight to Israel, and a Terrifying Plunge. *The New York Times*](#)

[Flydubai Co-Pilot Used Crash Axe to Attack Captain, Says UAE. *The Guardian*](#)

['Life Is Stronger Than Everything, and We Decided to Fight for It,' Says One of the Israelis Who Subdued Flydubai Copilot. *The Times of Israel*](#)

[Co-Pilot Accused of Trying to Hijack Flydubai Plane Probably Acted Alone, Israeli Sources Say. *CNN*](#)

[Fact Focus: What's Known About the Flydubai Attack Probe and the Red Flags About the Suspect. *Fox 59*](#)

Applying the News Story

Discuss what you would say and do if you were facing death, and reflect on the faith resources that would sustain you in mortal danger.

The Big Questions

1. What would you say to family members, friends and neighbors if you were facing the threat of sudden death?
2. How do you think you would act in a situation of mortal danger? What would inspire you to take action instead of remaining passive?
3. What faith resources would sustain you and give you peace in a time of danger to your life?
4. How does your faith community help you to face the end of life? What more could it do?
5. "Life is stronger than everything," said Assaf Rajuan after Flight 1073 landed safely, "and we decided to fight for it." What does it mean to you to fight for life? When is it time to accept death, and how should you act when you reach that point?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

1 Samuel 17:48-49

When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly

toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground. (For context, read [1 Samuel 17:24-49](#).)

In chapter 17 of 1 Samuel, King Saul had the Israelite army at his disposal, but he seemed powerless in the face of a giant named Goliath and the army of the Philistines. Then young David went to the battlefield, saw the giant, and asked his fellow Israelites, "[W]ho is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (v. 26). David put his trust not in the skill of the Israelite army, but in the power of the "living God."

Originally, Saul clothed David with his armor and weapons, but David removed them and picked up his staff, his shepherd's bag, his sling and five smooth stones. When Goliath saw David, he sneered and said, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air" (v. 44). David ran quickly toward the battle line and -- using his unique abilities -- took a stone from his bag and slung it hard into Goliath's forehead. Goliath fell to the ground, and David cut off his head, using the giant's own sword.

Although this seems to be a surprising victory, it actually makes perfect sense. History teaches us that Davids are usually insurgents, finding novel ways to defeat their enemies. They refuse to play by Goliath's rules, but instead use their unique abilities and adopt unconventional strategies.

In [The New Yorker magazine](#), Malcolm Gladwell has explained the secrets of being a successful underdog by talking about the game of basketball, in which towering Goliaths usually win by rising over their shorter opponents. But Gladwell believes that Davids can win by using the full-court press, a strategy in which you prevent your opponent from advancing up the court to the basket. If you are a David, and you allow a Goliath to get to the basket, he is probably going to score. But if you press him, and keep him at the other end of the court for a significant amount of time, you stand a chance of winning. When David "ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine," he was an underdog using the full-court press to beat a giant.

Questions: In perilous times, how do you put your trust in the power of the living God? When facing threats, what unique abilities do you bring to the situation? What help would you need in order to be able to run toward danger, instead of away from it?

Luke 23:44-46

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed, and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. (For context, read [Luke 23:32-46](#).)

Luke tells us that Jesus was crucified in a place called The Skull, along with two criminals, "one on his right and one on his left" (v. 33). He offers forgiveness to the people who are killing him, saying that "they do not know what they are doing" (v. 34) -- presumably, they are ignorant of his true identity.

Then, Jesus has a conversation with the criminals being crucified on either side of him. One mocks Jesus in the manner of the soldiers and the leaders of the people, saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" (v. 39). The criminal does not understand what it means for Jesus to be the Savior.

The second criminal rebukes the first, saying that although the two of them are guilty, Jesus "has done nothing wrong" (v. 41). When the second criminal asks Jesus to remember him in his kingdom, Jesus says with compassion, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise" (v. 43).

Then, darkness covers the entire land and the curtain of the temple is torn in two. Jesus cries out with a loud voice but remains in control until death, saying, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." The end of the life of Jesus is marked by forgiveness, compassion and confident faith in God.

Questions: At the end of life, what kind of forgiveness would you like to offer others, if any? Who would benefit from your compassion? How would you like to show your faith in God, even as your life comes to an end?

Acts 7:55-56

But filled with the Holy Spirit, [Stephen] gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" (For context, read [Acts 7:51-60](#).)

In the community of Christ-followers in Jerusalem, seven men are chosen to distribute food to people in need. One of them is Stephen, "a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5). The Greek word for the task is *diakoneo*, meaning "to serve," from which our English word "deacon" is formed. Stephen is one of the first deacons of the community.

After some Jews of Jerusalem accuse Stephen of blasphemy, the high priest asks Stephen to give an account of his words and actions. He offers a long speech about the history of Israel, including the persecution of the prophets by people who are "forever opposing the Holy Spirit" (v. 51). He concludes by accusing them of being "betrayers and murderers" of the "the Righteous One" -- Jesus Christ (v. 52).

The crowd becomes enraged by the words of Stephen, leading him to look heavenward and see the glory of God and the risen Jesus. The crowd drags Stephen out of the city and stones him. As he is being killed, he prays, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and he asks God to forgive his killers (vv. 59-60). Stephen

becomes the first martyr of what will become the Christian movement.

Questions: How can the approach of death be an opportunity to share the Christian faith? What would you like your last words to be? Why is it difficult to prepare for death, and who could help you with this task?

Acts 9:36-37

Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. (For context, read [Acts 9:36-43](#).)

In the book of Acts, Luke tells the story of a disciple named Tabitha, "which in Greek is Dorcas." Since Tabitha is a Hebrew name and Dorcas is a Greek name, Luke is writing to people who knew Hebrew and/or Greek, both Jews and Gentiles. Tabitha is a seamstress who is known for her generosity, making "tunics and other clothing" for the community of the followers of Christ (v. 39).

Tabitha dies, and the disciples send a request to the apostle Peter, asking him to visit. When Peter arrives, they take him to the room where the body of Tabitha is being kept. He kneels beside the body, prays, and then says, "Tabitha, get up" (v. 40). She opens her eyes, sees Peter, and gets up. He helps her to

rise, and then shows the followers of Christ that she is alive. Luke writes, "This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord" (v. 42).

Questions: At the end of your life, what kinds of good works and acts of charity will be associated with your name? What message was Peter sending by coming quickly to Joppa and raising Tabitha from the dead? How did his actions inspire belief in Jesus?

For Further Discussion

1. "How can we find a loving God in all circumstances?" asks TWW Team Member Mary Sells. "The book of Job is the story of one who is at the nexus of good versus bad, asking us to question who deserves to suffer -- if anyone, surely not a good person. Job shows us that faith is something to cling to even when the worst of the worst surrounds and affects us. Many times the apostle Paul tells us of his sufferings on his ministerial path -- death threats, imprisonments, etc. -- and he was as concerned for the others as for himself." Where do you find a loving God in life-threatening circumstances? How does your faith give you help in times of suffering? What good would it do to pray for others in those situations, in addition to praying for ourselves?

2. Assaf Rajuan, one of the Israeli heroes who overtook the Flydubai hijacker, [explained on X](#) how much miraculously improvised teamwork went into controlling the attacker and correcting the plane course. He thanked God for the miracle that

took place in the sky. "We understood that every passenger on the flight had a role," he said. In times of danger to you, your family and your neighbors, what is your role? Be specific.

3. "I hope that by thinking about things in advance, it will help me when it's time to act without even thinking, and hopefully act correctly," says TWW Team Member Frank Ramirez. "Peter was not at his best when he reacted as he did after the arrest of Jesus -- but there is grace, and we see among the resurrection appearances in John's gospel a face to face between Jesus and Peter which seems to be, among other things, a second commissioning." When have you needed forgiveness and a second chance? How forgiving are you when others make poor choices and let you down? What would help you to do better in the future?

4. Although Israel and Saudi Arabia do not currently maintain diplomatic relations, Israel's minister of culture thanked the Saudi authorities for their role in helping the Israeli passengers. "God willing, may peace come to us," he added. How might the good of peace come out of the horror of this terrorist attack on Flight 1073?

Responding to the News

The Latin phrase *memento mori* comes from the philosophers of classical antiquity and Christianity. It means "remember that you have to die," and it reminds us to live our lives in such a way that

we are always prepared for death. In the week to come, renew your trust in the power of God, practice compassion and forgiveness, share your faith with others, and use your unique abilities to care for family members, friends and neighbors.

Prayer

Almighty God, we thank you for people, in biblical times and today, who have faced death with courage and faith. May we do the same, as we trust your Son Jesus to lead us through every danger, to keep us strong and faithful, and to welcome us into our eternal home. Amen.

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