

A Collection of
Critical Analyses, facts and
figures

Hajj Disaster 2015

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Under the Supervision of

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Introduction

Hajj this time proved to be bloody affair thousands of pilgrims died in two separate incidents. First a gigantic crane crashed in Makkah resulting in the loss of lives of 114 pilgrims. Then a stampede at Mina, during the Jamarat ritual, took the lives of over 7000 people including 461 Iranians. These two tragedies during Hajj are hotly debated, but what's missing is the narrative holding the regime in Saudi Arabia responsible for both the incidents.

Mina tragedy reignited the Saudi-Iranian cold war in the public. State sponsored media in Iran quoted anonymous Saudi officials to claim that stampede at Mina was caused due to VIP movement of Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the deputy crown prince of Saudi Arabia. State backed media in Saudi Arabia retaliated by quoting anonymous Iranian officials to claim that a group of Iranian pilgrims caused the Mina stampede.

As usual, the religion card was tactfully played by House of Saud to absolve itself of any responsibility in both Makkah and Mina tragedies. Saudi Grand Mufti termed both incidents as part of fate and destiny, which according to him are inevitable and can't be forestalled by humans.

It is unfortunate that since the Aal-e Saud invaded Hijaz and occupied the holy cities of Mecca and Medina over 80 years ago after shedding the blood of tens of thousands men, women, and children, in addition to desecrating and destroying the holy sites of Islam, they have styled themselves Custodians of the Two Holy Shrines, despite their bleak, black and bloody record against humanity.

Annually millions of pilgrims go to Saudi Arabia for paying pilgrimage to the House of God and performing the Hajj rituals. It is quite evident that Saudi mismanagement has resulted in tragedies of various dimensions over the past years as show in this book.

Saudi Arabia is responsible for all the management of Hajj related activities and therefore it is also responsible for any mishap. The responsibility for both Makkah and Mina tragedies fall squarely on the shoulders of the Saudi government. Moreover, the negligence of Saudi

Arabia in dealing with Mina stampede should be a potential triggering point to challenge the hegemony of Saudi Arabia over holy sites of Islam. The holy sites of Makkah and Medina belong to entire Muslim Ummah, assuming the notion of Ummah to be true. Hence, all the Muslim countries in the world should have joint control of all the matters related to Hajj without affecting the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia.

This book is a collection of articles consisting of reports, analyses, statements, facts and figures about the 2015 Hajj catastrophe, the worst in the history of Hajj pilgrimage. Thanks are due to Hojjatoleslam Sheikh Barakat Rezai for encouraging me to prepare this book as a measure to protect and preserve the bitter memory of this unfortunate tragedy.

Jawid Akbari

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How Zionism helped create the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

In late 2014, according to the American journal, “Foreign Affairs”, the Saudi petroleum Minister, Ali al-Naimi is reported to have said “His Majesty King Abdullah has always been a model for good relations between Saudi Arabia and other states and the Jewish state is no exception.



The covert alliance between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Zionist entity of Israel should be no surprise to any student of British imperialism. The problem is the study of British imperialism has very few students. Indeed, one can peruse any undergraduate or post-graduate British university prospectus and rarely find a module in a Politics degree on the British Empire let alone a dedicated degree or Masters degree. Of course if the European led imperialist carnage in the four years between 1914 – 1918 tickles your cerebral cells then it’s not too difficult to find an appropriate institution to teach this subject, but if you would like to delve into how and why the British Empire waged war on mankind for almost four hundred years you’re practically on your own in this endeavour. One must admit, that from the British establishment’s perspective, this is a formidable and remarkable achievement.

In late 2014, according to the American journal, "Foreign Affairs", the Saudi petroleum Minister, Ali al-Naimi is reported to have said "His Majesty King Abdullah has always been a model for good relations between Saudi Arabia and other states and the Jewish state is no exception." Recently, Abdullah's successor, King Salman expressed similar concerns to those of Israel's to the growing agreement between the United States and Iran over the latter's nuclear programme. This led some to report that Israel and KSA presented a "united front" in their opposition to the nuclear deal. This was not the first time the Zionists and Saudis have found themselves in the same corner in dealing with a perceived common foe. In North Yemen in the 1960's, the Saudis were financing a British imperialist led mercenary army campaign against revolutionary republicans who had assumed authority after overthrowing the authoritarian, Imam. Gamal Abdul-Nasser's Egypt militarily backed the republicans, while the British induced the Saudis to finance and arm the remaining remnants of the Imam's supporters. Furthermore, the British organised the Israelis to drop arms for the British proxies in North Yemen, 14 times. The British, in effect, militarily but covertly, brought the Zionists and Saudis together in 1960's North Yemen against their common foe.

However, one must go back to the 1920's to fully appreciate the origins of this informal and indirect alliance between Saudi Arabia and the Zionist entity. The defeat of the Ottoman Empire by British imperialism in World War One, left three distinct authorities in the Arabian peninsula: Sharif of Hijaz: Hussain bin Ali of Hijaz (in the west), Ibn Rashid of Ha'il (in the north) and Emir Ibn Saud of Najd (in the east) and his religiously fanatical followers, the Wahhabis.

Ibn Saud had entered the war early in January 1915 on the side of the British, but was quickly defeated and his British handler, William Shakespeare was killed by the Ottoman Empire's ally Ibn Rashid. This defeat greatly hampered Ibn Saud's utility to the Empire and left him militarily hamstrung for a year.[1] The Sharif contributed the most to the Ottoman Empire's defeat by switching allegiances and leading the so-called 'Arab Revolt' in June 1916 which removed the Turkish presence

from Arabia. He was convinced to totally alter his position because the British had strongly led him to believe, via correspondence with Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, that a unified Arab country from Gaza to the Persian Gulf will be established with the defeat of the Turks. The letters exchanged between Sharif Hussain and Henry McMahon are known as the McMahon-Hussain Correspondence.

Understandably, the Sharif as soon as the war ended wanted to hold the British to their war time promises, or what he perceived to be their war time promises, as expressed in the aforementioned correspondence. The British, on the other hand, wanted the Sharif to accept the Empire's new reality which was a division of the Arab world between them and the French (Sykes-Picot agreement) and the implementation of the Balfour Declaration, which guaranteed 'a national for the Jewish people' in Palestine by colonisation with European Jews. This new reality was contained in the British written, Anglo-Hijaz Treaty, which the Sharif was profoundly averse to signing.[2] After all, the revolt of 1916 against the Turks was dubbed the 'Arab Revolt' not the 'Hijazi Revolt'.

Actually, the Sharif let it be known that he will never sell out Palestine to the Empire's Balfour Declaration; he will never acquiescence to the establishment of Zionism in Palestine or accept the new random borders drawn across Arabia by British and French imperialists. For their part the British began referring to him as an 'obstructionist', a 'nuisance' and of having a 'recalcitrant' attitude.

The British let it be known to the Sharif that they were prepared to take drastic measures to bring about his approval of the new reality regardless of the service that he had rendered them during the War. After the Cairo Conference in March 1921, where the new Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill met with all the British operatives in the Middle East, T.E. Lawrence (i.e. of Arabia) was dispatched to meet the Sharif to bribe and bully him to accept Britain's Zionist colonial project in Palestine. Initially, Lawrence and the Empire offered 80,000 rupees.[3] The Sharif rejected it outright. Lawrence then offered him an annual payment of £100,000.[4] The Sharif refused to compromise and sell Palestine to British Zionism.

When financial bribery failed to persuade the Sharif, Lawrence threatened him with an Ibn Saud takeover. Lawrence claimed that “politically and militarily, the survival of Hijaz as a viable independent Hashemite kingdom was wholly dependent on the political will of Britain, who had the means to protect and maintain his rule in the region.” [5] In between negotiating with the Sharif, Lawrence made the time to visit other leaders in the Arabian peninsula and informed them that they if they don’t tow the British line and avoid entering into an alliance with the Sharif, the Empire will unleash Ibn Saud and his Wahhabis who after all is at Britain’s ‘beck and call’.[6]

Simultaneously, after the Conference, Churchill travelled to Jerusalem and met with the Sharif’s son, Abdullah, who had been made the ruler, “Emir”, of a new territory called “Transjordan.” Churchill informed Abdullah that he should persuade ‘his father to accept the Palestine mandate and sign a treaty to such effect,’ if not “the British would unleash Ibn Saud against Hijaz.”[7] In the meantime the British were planning to unleash Ibn Saud on the ruler of Ha’il, Ibn Rashid.

Ibn Rashid had rejected all overtures from the British Empire made to him via Ibn Saud, to be another of its puppets.[8] More so, Ibn Rashid expanded his territory north to the new mandated Palestinian border as well as to the borders of Iraq in the summer of 1920. The British became concerned that an alliance maybe brewing between Ibn Rashid who controlled the northern part of the peninsula and the Sharif who controlled the western part. More so, the Empire wanted the land routes between the Palestinian ports on the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf under the rule of a friendly party. At the Cairo Conference, Churchill agreed with an imperial officer, Sir Percy Cox that “Ibn Saud should be ‘given the opportunity to occupy Hail.”[9] By the end of 1920, the British were showering Ibn Saud with “a monthly ‘grant’ of £10,000 in gold, on top of his monthly subsidy. He also received abundant arms supplies, totalling more than 10,000 rifles, in addition to the critical siege and four field guns” with British-Indian instructors.[10] Finally, in September 1921, the British unleashed Ibn Saud on Ha’il which officially surrendered in

November 1921. It was after this victory the British bestowed a new title on Ibn Saud. He was no longer to be “Emir of Najd and Chief of its Tribes” but “Sultan of Najd and its Dependencies”. Ha’il had dissolved into a dependency of the Empire’s Sultan of Najd.

If the Empire thought that the Sharif, with Ibn Saud now on his border and armed to the teeth by the British, would finally become more amenable to the division of Arabia and the British Zionist colonial project in Palestine they were short lived. A new round of talks between Abdulla’s son, acting on behalf of his father in Transjordan and the Empire resulted in a draft treaty accepting Zionism. When it was delivered to the Sharif with an accompanying letter from his son requesting that he “accept reality”, he didn’t even bother to read the treaty and instead composed a draft treaty himself rejecting the new divisions of Arabia as well as the Balfour Declaration and sent it to London to be ratified![11]

Ever since 1919 the British had gradually decreased Hussain’s subsidy to the extent that by the early 1920’s they had suspended it, while at the same time continued subsidising Ibn Saud right through the early 1920’s.[12] After a further three rounds of negotiations in Amman and London, it dawned on the Empire that Hussain will never relinquish Palestine to Great Britain’s Zionist project or accept the new divisions in Arab lands.[13] In March 1923, the British informed Ibn Saud that it will cease his subsidy but not without awarding him an advance ‘grant’ of £50,000 upfront, which amounted to a year’s subsidy.[14]

In March 1924, a year after the British awarded the ‘grant’ to Ibn Saud, the Empire announced that it had terminated all discussions with Sharif Hussain to reach an agreement.[15] Within weeks the forces of Ibn Saud and his Wahhabi followers began to administer what the British foreign secretary, Lord Curzon called the “final kick” to Sharif Hussain and attacked Hijazi territory.[16] By September 1924, Ibn Saud had overrun the summer capital of Sharif Hussain, Ta’if. The Empire then wrote to Sharif’s sons, who had been awarded kingdoms in Iraq and Transjordan not to provide any assistance to their besieged father or in diplomatic terms they were informed “to give no countenance to interference in the

Hedjaz”.[17] In Ta’if, Ibn Saud’s Wahhabis committed their customary massacres, slaughtering women and children as well as going into mosques and killing traditional Islamic scholars.[18] They captured the holiest place in Islam, Mecca, in mid-October 1924. Sharif Hussain was forced to abdicate and went to exile to the Hijazi port of Akaba. He was replaced as monarch by his son Ali who made Jeddah his governmental base. As Ibn Saud moved to lay siege to the rest of Hijaz, the British found the time to begin incorporating the northern Hijazi port of Akaba into Transjordan. Fearing that Sharif Hussain may use Akaba as a base to rally Arabs against the Empire’s Ibn Saud, the Empire let it be known that in no uncertain terms that he must leave Akaba or Ibn Saud will attack the port. For his part, Sharif Hussain responded that he had, “never acknowledged the mandates on Arab countries and still protest against the British Government which has made Palestine a national home for the Jews.”[19]

Sharif Hussain was forced out of Akaba, a port he had liberated from the Ottoman Empire during the ‘Arab Revolt’, on the 18th June 1925 on HMS Cornflower.

Ibn Saud had begun his siege of Jeddah in January 1925 and the city finally surrendered in December 1925 bringing to an end over 1000 years of rule by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)’s descendants. The British officially recognised Ibn Saud as the new King of Hijaz in February 1926 with other European powers following suit within weeks. The new unified Wahhabi state was rebranded by the Empire in 1932 as the “Kingdom of Saudi Arabia” (KSA). A certain George Rendel, an officer working at the Middle East desk at the Foreign Office in London, claimed credit for the new name.

On the propaganda level, the British served the Wahhabi takeover of Hijaz on three fronts. Firstly, they portrayed and argued that Ibn Saud’s invasion of Hijaz was motivated by religious fanaticism rather than by British imperialism’s geo-political considerations.[20] This deception is propounded to this day, most recently in Adam Curtis’s acclaimed BBC “Bitter Lake” documentary, whereby he states that the “fierce intolerant vision of wahhabism” drove the “beduins” to create Saudi Arabia.[21]

Secondly, the British portrayed Ibn Saud's Wahhabi fanatics as a benign and misunderstood force who only wanted to bring Islam back to its purest form.[22] To this day, these Islamist jihadis are portrayed in the most benign manner when their armed insurrections are supported by Britain and the West such as 1980's Afghanistan or in today's Syria, where they are referred to in the western media as "moderate rebels." Thirdly, British historians portray Ibn Saud as an independent force and not as a British instrument used to horn away anyone perceived to be surplus to imperial requirements. For example, Professor Eugene Rogan's recent study on the history on Arabs claims that "Ibn Saud had no interest in fighting" the Ottoman Empire. This is far from accurate as Ibn Saud joined the war in 1915. He further disingenuously claims that Ibn Saud was only interested in advancing "his own objectives" which fortuitously always dovetailed with those of the British Empire.[23]

In conclusion, one of the most overlooked aspects of the Balfour Declaration is the British Empire's commitment to "use their best endeavours to facilitate" the creation of "a national home for the Jewish people". Obviously, many nations in the world today were created by the Empire but what makes Saudi Arabia's borders distinctive is that its northern and north-eastern borders are the product of the Empire facilitating the creation of Israel. At the very least the dissolution of the two Arab sheikhdoms of Ha'il and Hijaz by Ibn Saud's Wahhabis is based in their leaders' rejection to facilitate the British Empire's Zionist project in Palestine.

Therefore, it is very clear that the British Empire's drive to impose Zionism in Palestine is embedded in the geographical DNA of contemporary Saudi Arabia. There is further irony in the fact that the two holiest sites in Islam are today governed by the Saudi clan and Wahhabi teachings because the Empire was laying the foundations for Zionism in Palestine in the 1920s. Contemporaneously, it is no surprise that both Israel and Saudi Arabia are keen in militarily intervening on the side of "moderate rebels" i.e. jihadis, in the current war on Syria, a country which covertly and overtly rejects the Zionist colonisation of Palestine.

As the United States, the ‘successor’ to the British Empire in defending western interests in the Middle East, is perceived to be growing more hesitant in engaging militarily in the Middle East, there is an inevitability that the two nations rooted in the Empire’s Balfour Declaration, Israel and Saudi Arabia, would develop a more overt alliance to defend their common interests.

By: Nu'man Abd al-Wahid

This article first appeared on Mondoweiss on January 7.

Notes

[1] Gary Troeller, *“The Birth of Saudi Arabia”* (London: Frank Cass, 1976) pg.91.

[2] Askar H. al-Enazy, *“ The Creation of Saudi Arabia: Ibn Saud and British Imperial Policy, 1914-1927”* (London: Routledge, 2010), pg. 105-106.

[3] *ibid.*, pg. 109.

[4] *ibid.*, pg.111.

[5] *ibid.*

[6] *ibid.*

[7] *ibid.*, pg 107.

[8] *ibid.*, pg. 45-46 and pg.101-102.

[9] *ibid.*, pg.104.

[10] *ibid.*

[11] *ibid.*, pg. 113.

[12] *ibid.*, pg.110 and Troeller, *op. cit.*, pg.166.

[13] al-Enazy *op cit.*, pg.112-125.

[14] al-Enazy, *op. cit.*, pg.120.

[15] *ibid.*, pg.129.

[16] *ibid.*, pg. 106 and Troeller *op. cit.*, 152.

[17] *al-Enazy, op. cit.*, pg. 136 and Troeller *op. cit.*, pg.219.

[18] David Howarth, “*The Desert King: The Life of Ibn Saud*” (London: Quartet Books, 1980), pg. 133 and Randall Baker, “*King Husain and the Kingdom of Hejaz*” (Cambridge: The Oleander Press, 1979), pg.201-202.

[19] Quoted in *al-Enazy op. cit.*, pg. 144.

[20] *ibid.*, pg. 138 and Troeller *op. cit.*, pg. 216.

[21] In the original full length BBC iPlayer version this segment begins towards the end at 2 hrs 12 minutes 24 seconds.

[22] *al-Enazy op. cit.*, pg. 153.

[23] Eugene Rogan, “*The Arabs: A History*”, (London: Penguin Books, 2009), pg.220.

An Overview of Hajj tragedy

The Saudi Grand Mufti, Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah Al al-Shaykh said, some pilgrims wanted to be killed in Mina in order to reach a high station in the hereafter, hence they put their selves in harm!

On September 11, 2015, the fourteenth-year anniversary of the U.S. twin-tower attack, a crane on the loose belonging to the Bin Laden family (family of the suspected twin-tower master-mind) construction company handling work at the Haram, went berserk, and like a thunderbolt from hell crushed pilgrims in the precincts of the holy Ka'abah. Over 100 pilgrims lost their lives.

Two weeks later when the hajj was at its peak and gathering momentum, about 4,000 pilgrims also lost their lives in what was said to be a "stampede" at the Jamarat Al-Aqbah. Many more are still missing.

Prior to these two disaster, there was a fire at a residence of the pilgrims, in which fewer pilgrims died. There were casualties.

Of all world reactions, that of the Bahraini Al Khalifah dynasty was most strange and bizarre. The unpopular Al-Khalifa who had been chased out of his country and took refuge in Saudi Arabia congratulated the Saudis for organizing a successful Hajj!

The first Saudi official report was very degrading and humiliating, as it accused black African pilgrims for the tragedy. It later back-pedaled and claimed that the said "stampede" was as a result of disregard to Hajj rules by the whole pilgrims in the conduct of the hajj rite; ironically, they killed themselves!

The Saudi Grand Mufti, Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah Al al-Shaykh said, some pilgrims wanted to be killed in Mina in order to reach a high station in the hereafter, hence they put their selves in harm!

Subsequently, in the most disturbing manner, typical of the Wahabbi ideology, the Saudi authorities blamed Allah for the tragedy. And like a wild fire, those benefitting from the Muslims' wealth hijacked by the Al-Saud royal family, the Oil Sheikhs, echoed the theory across continents.

They said, “This was due to divine fate and destiny which is inevitable!” According to this theory, Allah decided to take the lives of the pilgrims at Mina in this humiliating manner, hence the stampede.

Reacting to this, a renowned teacher in the Islamic Seminary of Qom, Iran, Ayatollah Makarem-Shirazi said the House of Saud has no clear understanding of the meaning of divine fate and destiny explaining that, “Can we remove road controls and say the death toll from the accidents that will occur are caused by divine fate and destiny?”

When all these raging controversies were going on, Nigerians were astonished to hear from the BBC Hausa radio (also monitored by Daily Trust newspaper) an interview with Kebbi State Ameerul Hajj and Emir of Argungun, Isma’il Muhammad Mira who narrowly survived the ordeal, blamed the Saudi security for the tragedy.

He said, the Saudi security blocked the way which thousands of pilgrims were passing for the symbolic rite in Mina under scorching sun.

“Saudi security barricaded the road. That was how everybody stumbled. Those at the back were not aware that the front was no longer moving, and those at the front were stopped by the Saudi security. And the security were being increased in number to ensure that they effectively blocked pilgrims from passing through,” he said.

He said, “Only God knows what they planned and what happened at the place, and God will avenge the deaths. But what we know is that they barricaded our way.”

There is another confession by a Nigerian pilgrim and legislator, Senator Bgenga Ashafa representing Lagos South constituency, who told the Senate during its session that Saudi authorities should be held accountable for the disaster for blocking 9 out of the 10 doors at Mina.

He said, Nigeria, with the second highest death toll, should seek explanation from Saudi Arabia over the death of its pilgrims. This is the likely reason a delegation from Saudi Arabia quickly visited Nigerian National Assembly and apologized.

Senator Gbenga Ashafa also accused the Saudi medical officials for inaction to save lives, because of what he described as their “deficiency in faith”. According to him, for the timely and well-coordinated effort of Nigerian medical personnel, the death toll would have been higher.

“The Saudi security forces were terrible; they did nothing. They were just watching as people began dying. No efforts were made to help anyone”, this statement was from a pilgrim who survived the stampede during an interview.

In an interview with ABNA news agency, another pilgrim narrated what actually happened as a primary witness to the event: “The Saudi police blocked the road, forcing people to move in a very small and closed up road. They sent most of Hajj pilgrims on Street 204, but unfortunately that street was closed out! Police then called on those people in the front to sit and wait. When they sat down those behind thought the way had been opened up and as a result moved forth. People began tripping over one another and mayhem ensued”.

He was also asked why Iran and Nigeria suffered most casualty: “The tents of African and Iranian pilgrims were set up near where the accident happened, which is why they suffered most”.

Similarly, pan Arab daily Asharq Al-Awsat, a medium financed by the Al-Saud family claimed that the stampede was prompted when 300 Iranian pilgrims travelled from Mozdalafe to Mina failed to go to their tents. An Iranian pilgrim interviewed said it was not true. “After coming to Mina we went to our tents and ate breakfast, then we moved toward Jamarat. This event happened near Jamarat not at the entrance of Mozdalafe. There was a one-way road toward the Jamarat. How is it possible for 300 people to move against thousands?!”

There is now a twist in the story. The cause of the stampede is now Iran. Trumpets of Saudi royal kingdom have now began a full blown crafted propaganda in the media, which claimed that the stampede was as a result of lawlessness of the Iranian pilgrims.

In countries like Nigeria where Wahabbism is flourishing and being financed by the Al-Saud family with blood Riyals and Dollars, special programmes were being organized with 'Cheap Imams', while news commentaries are sponsored on radio stations in order to soften the tensed nerves of Nigerians in the face of glaring evidences regarding the callous and recklessness of the Saudi authorities. According to this propaganda, that was why Iran recorded the highest deaths in the tragedy! Asharq Al-Awsat said so. What a bundle of contradiction!

The contradictory statements were aimed at exonerating the Saudi royal family from blame, when in the actual sense the family's hands are soaked with innocent blood. A Saudi Arabic daily, Al-Diyar reported that, the stampeded was caused by the untimely presence of the Saudi infamous deputy crown prince (whose unofficial nickname is "Reckless") and Saudi Defense Minister's entourage, which was accompanied by 200 military and 150 police personnel, in addition to 200 luxurious vehicles. This resulted in fatal blocking of the two of the three corridors of Mina. The irrefutable personal video recording of the incident attested to this fact. To cover up what actually happened in Mina, the Saudi Kingdom banned the release of the official CCTV recording of the event.

The same Asharq Al-Awsat in an interview with Mr. Hani al-Shoukri, an astute Middle-East expert presented a new insight into the Mina tragedy. Mr. Hani al-Shoukri claimed that there is evidence indicating the Saudi security forces indeed dispersed toxic chemicals among the pilgrims, which led to the deadly incident.

Another Egyptian Saudi-based medical expert, Dr. Abdulhamid Fauzy wrote a complaint letter to Saudi monarch that a poisonous substance must have been used on the pilgrims during the stampeded.

As reported by AL-MUDIHI news channel, Dr. Fauzy explained that after thorough medical examination and expert analysis he and other doctors in Egypt have come to the conclusion that a poisonous gas has been used on the pilgrims.

He further explained that, some of the pilgrims who survived are now experiencing complete loss of memory, to the extent that some could not even remember their names. He noted that such situation cannot happen to victims of a stampeded.

Many observers have suspected a foul play in the hasty burial and refusal of the Saudi authorities for medical examination of the corpses to ascertain cause of their death, as well as its refusal to allow for an independent investigation. The conspiracy is obvious.

The hands of Mossad is highly visible in the Mina tragedy. Israel and Saudi are two countries having sleepless nights over the brokered deal on Iran's nuclear enrichment.

This year alone, the Muslims world has suffered triple tragedy in Saudi Arabia with over 4,000 deaths and increasing number of casualty, without the country accepting responsibility and offering apology. Instead, the Muslim world is blamed. Whatever the case, the world can never trust Saudi kingdom in view of its relationship and total submission to the western world. There is now greater suspicious on the Saudi monarch, especially with its alliance with U.S. in killing Muslims in Yemen, Bahrain, Syria and Iraq.

The House of Al-Saud is becoming shaky by the day; internal conflict becoming more visible. There is said to be internal wrangling within the family with the second generation crown Princes calling for reform within the dynasty, and the extension of rule beyond the direct descendants.

The global reaction now is that, Hajj operation be taken off the shoulder of Saudi royal family. The two holy sites in Makkah and all the wealth in the country belong to all Muslims, and not the exclusive reserve of the Al-Saud. If authorities in Iraq can effectively handle a pilgrimage of 40 million participants with no single death, then the Al-Saud family has woefully failed. They do not deserve the title of Custodians of the Two Holy Sites, but killers of visitors of the two holy sites.

The insensitivity of Saudi authorities knows no boundary. The kingdom did not show any sign of remorse to what happened; no national mourning,

and no apology. Instead, it was busy hosting world burly wrestlers (WWF) for a live action in the country. It did the same thing during the Rushdie affair. When the late Ayatollah Ruhullah al-Kohmaini passed death sentence on Salman Rushdie over his blasphemous book, *Satanic Verses*, the Saudi government was busy hosting World Cup organized by the same governments that financed and backed the author. It was only Iran, among all Muslims nations, that observed a three-day national mourning over the Mina tragedy.

Let there be an independent investigation to be jointly carried out by representatives of all Muslim nations. An eye for an eye. All those found complicit in the tragedy should face the law, as stipulated by Islam. Let the justice claimed by the Al-Saud kingdom take its course. This issue should go beyond mere compensation.

Hajj disasters under Saudi occupation

The Mina deaths were not the first even if the present tragedy surpassed all previous totals. There is a long list of disasters that have befallen the pilgrims under Saudi-controlled Hajj.

Repeated horrors faced by hujjaj in the performance of Hajj rites have once again focused attention on Saudi mismanagement of one of the most important pillars of Islam.

This year's Hajj has been one of the worst in living memory. It started with the September 11 crane crash into al-Masjid al-Haram itself killing 115 people and injuring several hundred others. This was followed a few days later (September 17) by a fire in a hotel in Aziziya (near Mina) in which mercifully no one died but dozens of people were injured. These disasters were eclipsed by the horrific deaths on September 24 of some 2,000 pilgrims in Mina (the Saudis have admitted to 770 deaths so far but with more than 800 injured and thousands missing, the actual death toll is likely to be closer to the higher figure).

Below we give a list of disasters under Saudi-controlled Hajj.

1975: Mina is referred to as the ‘Tent City’ because the pilgrims stay there in tents for several days. A fire during that year’s Hajj in Mina killed about 200 pilgrims. An exploding gas tank inside a tent in an area where mostly Turkish and Nigerian Muslims were staying caused the fire.

1979: On November 4, hundreds of people—members of the Otayba and Juhayman clans of Arabia including their wives and children—sought refuge in al-Majid al-Haram when their plot to overthrow the Saudi regime was uncovered. The Wahhabi regime brought French and Moroccan paratroopers and used heavy weapons to attack the holiest sanctuary in Islam, every action in complete violation of Qur’anic injunctions. When the mayhem ended more than 230 people lay dead, almost all of them inside the Haram.

1987: On 31 July, 402 people, mostly Iranian pilgrims, were shot and killed and 649 wounded in Makkah when Saudi security forces commanded by a German General Ulrich Wegner specially brought in to plan and supervise the massacre, attacked Iranian pilgrims. The massacre occurred despite prior arrangements agreed between the Iranian and Saudi authorities for the *Bara’at min al mushrikeen* march to take place (this is based on the Qur’anic command in *Surah al-Tawbah, ayat* [9:03]). *Crescent International* Editor Zafar Bangash happened to be present there and wrote a book, titled, *The Makkah massacre and the future of the Haramain*, about the Saudi crime against innocent pilgrims.

1990: On July 2, some 1,426 Muslim pilgrims were trampled to death in a stampede in a pedestrian tunnel outside of Makkah in Mina. The stampede occurred because the Saudi security forces closed the tunnel exit because some ‘prince’ and his entourage were passing nearby!

1994: A stampede near the Jamarat site in Mina where pilgrims undertake the ritual of stoning the devil killed 270 pilgrims. Most of the disasters occur in Mina because of lack of crowd control and Saudi mismanagement.

1997: On April 17, a fire in the tents in Mina killed 346 pilgrims and injured 1,500 others.

1998: Another stampede a year later (1998) resulted in the death of 180 pilgrims close to the Jamarat site.

2001: In February 2001, an early morning stampede at the same Jamarat site killed 145 pilgrims, most of them Pakistani women. *Crescent International* editor (Zafar Bangash) and their group were held up in traffic from Muzdalifah to their tent in Mina for 8 hours (normally it would take barely 15-20 minutes) because the police had blocked off several streets. They would not tell anyone why the streets were blocked off and what alternate routes could be used.

2003: 14 pilgrims were killed in a stampede during the stoning ritual when thousands of people were forced by Saudi police to pass through a narrow passageway.

2004: On February 1, stampede at the same Jamarat site killed 251 pilgrims and injured another 244.

2005: Three pilgrims were crushed to death in a stampede at the stoning site in Jamarat in Mina.

2006: A four-storey hotel just 60 meters from the walls of al-Masjid al-Haram collapsed, killing 76 people and wounding dozens of others.

2006: A few days later (January 12), 364 pilgrims were killed in a stampede during the stoning ritual in Mina.

2015: At least 115 people are killed and hundreds injured when a crane collapsed into al-Masjid al-Haram in Makkah, Islam's holiest site, on September 11.

2015: On September 24, another stampede resulted in the death of some 2,000 pilgrims. This is the direct result of Saudi security forces blocking two streets as well as gates leading to the stoning site. Reports say that deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman and his entourage of some 350 were passing through and heading toward the palace where king Salman was receiving 'dignitaries.'

Were all of the above God's Will and humans had no role to play in them as the Saudi court mufti, Shaykh Abd al Aziz al Shaykh claimed? Did God order the Saudis to block off the streets so that some Saudi 'royal' could pass through even if it would result in overcrowding, suffocation and the pilgrims' urge to leave as soon as possible causing a stampede killing innocent people?

Mina stampede

On 24 September 2015, a crowd collapse caused the deaths of at least 2,236 pilgrims who were suffocated or crushed during the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Mina, Mecca, making it the deadliest Hajj disaster in history. Estimates of the number of dead vary; the Associated Press reported around 4000 dead, while Agence France-Presse reported lesser killed. Based on the total of the individual national reports cited, at least 4,000 people died. The official death toll from the government of Saudi Arabia remains unchanged since two days after the event, with 769 reported killed and 934 others injured.

The incident happened in Mina at the intersection of streets 204 and 223 leading up to Jamarat Bridge. The cause of the disaster is disputed. The Mina disaster has inflamed tensions between regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran, which were already raised due to the wider turmoil in the Middle East, such as the Syrian Civil War and Yemeni Civil War. In a press conference held on the day of the incident, Saudi Ministry of Interior spokesman Mansour Al-Turki attempted to address most issues regarding the incident. He said that an investigation was ongoing and that the exact cause of the overcrowding that led to a deadly crush on Mina Street 204 is yet to be ascertained.



The Jamarat Bridge complex.

Mina Disaster Map—Area surrounding streets 204 and 223

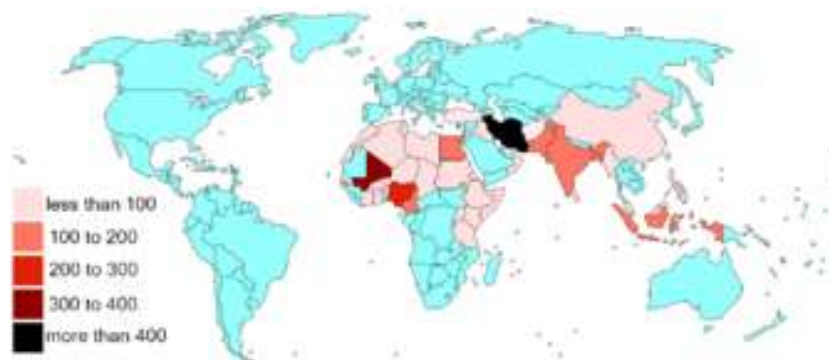
The Hajj is an annual pilgrimage in Mecca prescribed as a duty for Muslims to undertake at least once in their lifetime if they can afford to do so physically and financially. As traditionally performed, the Hajj consists of a series of rites including the Stoning of the Devil (ramī al-jamarāt) which takes place at the Jamarat Bridge in Mina, a district a few miles east of Mecca. The Jamarat Bridge is a pedestrian bridge from which pilgrims can throw pebbles at the three jamrah pillars. The stoning ritual is the last major ritual and is often regarded as the most dangerous part of the Hajj, with its large crowds, confined spaces, and tight scheduling.

The 2015 Hajj took place against a background of regional turmoil (including wars in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya), the hottest temperatures in Mecca in 20 years, the threat of MERS, and pre-existing tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

A number of Hajj-related crowd crush disasters have occurred in the past, with 1,426 people being suffocated and trampled to death in a 1990 tunnel tragedy, and at least 701 people killed in crowd crushes between 1991 and 2005. 346 people were killed in a similar Jamarat incident in 2006, which prompted the Saudi government to improve the infrastructure of the city and its procession routes.

The Saudi Arabian government has been spending \$60 billion to expand the Grand Mosque which houses the Kaaba, and has deployed 100,000 security forces and 5,000 CCTV cameras to monitor the crowds. The Saudis have also built a permanent tent city in the Mina valley. It is covered with approximately 160,000 air conditioned tents across multiple campsites (grouped by nationality) for use by Hajj pilgrims.

The disaster



Nationalities of victims of the 2015 Mina stampede by number of deceased

According to a statement by the Saudi civil defence directorate, a stampede occurred Thursday 24 September 2015 at 09:00 Mecca time (06:00 UTC) at the junction between street 204 and 223 as pilgrims were en route to the Jamarat Bridge. The Saudi Interior Ministry stated that the stampede was triggered when two large groups of pilgrims intersected

from different directions onto the same street. The area was not previously identified as a dangerous bottleneck. The junction lay between two pilgrim camp sites. The International Business Times and the Daily Mail reported that the governor of Mecca Province and Saudi Arabia's head of the central Hajj committee, Prince Khalid bin Faisal Al Saud, blamed the crush outside the holy city on "some pilgrims with African nationalities"; this caused some African leaders to lash out in response.

Lebanon-based Arabic-language daily Ad-Diyar alleged that the convoy escorting Prince Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud, comprising 200 soldiers and 150 police officers, played a central role in the incident, by making some pilgrims turn around against the flow, which triggered a stampede. The article also stated that Mohammad and his huge entourage swiftly abandoned the scene, adding that the Saudi authorities sought to hush up the entire story and impose a media blackout on reporting Mohammad's presence in the area.

Press TV reported that an Iranian survivor of the Mina incident, whose name was not revealed, said only a handful of Saudi soldiers assisted those being trampled in the crush. "When I returned to the disaster point to help, Saudi soldiers prevented me from entering the area. This, as only a handful of Saudi soldiers were helping the victims, while a large number of them were standing by idly and looking," the man told Press TV. A number of other survivors have also shared similar accounts, saying that mismanagement by the Saudi authorities and a poor rescue response complicated the situation.

In a press conference held the day of the incident, spokesman of the Ministry of Interior Mansour Al-Turki attempted to address the incident. He said that an investigation was ongoing, that the exact causes for crowding that led to the deadly stampede on Mina Street 204 are yet to be ascertained. He explained that "Street number 204 is a road leading from the camps to the Jamarat Bridge. What happened was that a group of pilgrims on buses were allowed to descend onto the pathways that lead to the Jamarat Bridge at a time that wasn't allocated to them," Al Arabiya News Channel's correspondent in Mina, Saad Al-Matrafi said. "As they

neared the area, they converged with an existing group of people who were already in the area, which pushed the area to over capacity." The spokesman also mentioned that most diplomatic convoys take place in the south of Mina and in underground tunnels, while the incident took place in the north. He added that news regarding the incident should be sought from official sources, pointing out that most controversial news regarding the unfortunate incident are coming from sources at conflict with the Saudi Government.

One day after the Mina crush tragedy, Saudi media publicized a statement by the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah Al ash-Sheikh, exonerating Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayef (known as "MBN") from responsibility for the disaster, as his Interior Minister title holds him accountable for safety issues at the Mecca shrine. The Grand Mufti's statement, which characterized the incident as "beyond human control", "inevitable", and attributable to "fate", immunized MBN against possible domestic criticism.⁰

Casualties

The exact casualty figure for the Mina crowd collapse is disputed. The Saudi government claims only 769 deaths while Iranian media sources have proposed figures as high as 7000. Independent estimates range between 4000 and 7000 people killed.

Estimates of the injured and missing also vary greatly; Saudi reports claim 934 injured; Iranian reports are much higher, estimating more than 2000 injuries. On the day of the disaster, the Saudi Civil Defense directorate stated that casualties were of multiple nationalities and announced the deployment of 4,000 personnel to the stampede site alongside 220 emergency response units. Pilgrims were redirected away from the stampede site, and the Saudi Red Crescent Authority was mobilized. Medics at Mina's emergency hospital said they alone received almost 700 people on the day of the incident, a claim that was contradicted by the facts on the ground. The eight hospitals around the Hajj landmarks and the

six main hospitals in the city of Mecca were operating at full capacity after the stampede, medics said.

Saudi King Orders Concealing Mina CCTV Records

Saudi King Salman has ordered his forces to transfer all the images recorded by the closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras of the Hajj stoning rituals in Mina to an unknown location to be hidden in a top secret data center, media reports said on Sunday.

"The Saudi king's order came after some videos showing the main cause of the Mina tragedy were released on the Internet," the Arabic-language Middle East Panorama news website reported.

It noted that another reason for collecting the Mina CCTV captured videos is related to a demand by the world Muslims and Hajj pilgrims to set up an international fact-finding committee to probe into the Hajj tragic incidents.

A stampede during one of the last rituals of the Hajj season killed more than 7,000 people and left thousands wounded.

The stampede occurred during the ritual known as "stoning the devil" in the tent city of Mina, about two miles from Mecca.

Prominent victims

- **Ghazanfar Roknabadi**, an Iranian diplomat, who served as Iranian ambassador to Lebanon from 2010 to 2014, originally missing, was confirmed dead on November 25, 2015. Iran's ISNA news agency reported that the body of missing Iranian diplomat Ghazanfar Roknabadi was identified via DNA testing and visual confirmation by two of his brothers. While some Iranian officials had claimed Roknabadi was alive, and had been kidnapped by Saudi Arabia under cover of the Mina crush, Iranian news sources (PressTV and Mehr News Agency) report that he died in the crush.

Saudi Arabia had initially denied that Roknabadi was present at the 2015 Hajj. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Marzieh Afkham, on 28 September 2015, referring to Saudi media reports that say they have no official record of the entry of Ghazanfar Asl Roknabadi into the kingdom, described the reports as "incorrect" and "hasty", saying the ministry has documents showing that Riyadh had approved an ordinary Hajj visa for the dead diplomat.⁰ Iranian media also released footage on 29 September, showing Roknabadi's presence in Mina.¹ The passport showing his entrance into Saudi Arabia was also released by Iranian media.¹

- **Adeola Maurufudeen Adefolabi**, from Lagos, Nigeria, was one term honourable member representing Ifako-Ijaiye in the lower chamber of the National Assembly and former chairman of Ifako Ijaiye and Ojokoro Local Government Areas.¹¹
- **Tijani El-Miskin** was a professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Maiduguri and a former head of special training course for the students of Arabic studies at the University of Maiduguri in Gaboru. He also was the Chairman of the Borno State Pilgrims Board.¹
- **Hajiya Bilkisu Yusuf** was the first female editor from the northern part of Nigeria. She studied political science in Nigeria and the USA and journalism in Russia. After that Bilkisu Yusuf pursued a successful career in journalism in Nigeria, working for the Daily Trust and Leadership newspapers and several local editions in Kano and Kaduna states.¹
- **Mufti Mohammed Farooq**, a prominent Indian Islamic scholar who was to perform Hajj, has been missing since the stampede. Farooq, a senior religious scholar, is a prolific writer and has authored over 50 books on a range of subjects, including Hadith and Fiqh, in Urdu and Hindi. He is the founder and principal of the Jamia Mahmoodia school in Meerut.¹

Eyewitness accounts

Early eyewitnesses accounts stated that the crush was caused by the closure of eastern part of Street 206, which forced pilgrims travel up Street 223, colliding with a mass of people moving the opposite direction on Street 204.¹

Alhaji Samaila Dabai Yombe, Deputy Governor of the Nigerian state of Kebbi, who was present at the incident, stated that the deaths happened due to a blockage of the route to Jamarat Bridge. "What actually happened was that all the pilgrims scheduled to throw Jamrat at that time were channeled to one particular street. At a time we got to a certain point around 8:00am, a military vehicle was set across to create a barrier and then some of the Saudi soldiers were standing by, suggesting that you cannot go beyond that point. About 5,000 people coming from the same direction were not aware of the road block in front, which resulted to a tight and stationary human traffic, which made it very difficult for us to even stand. So, we continued to squat to make room for fresh air while the temperature was about 47 degrees celsius. Pilgrims, in efforts to get fresh air, attempted to scale fences of tents on both sides of the road. Very few succeeded, while most people just succumb to the situation. It was at this juncture that we saw dead bodies piling up around us".

Ishaq Akintola, a Nigerian Professor of Islamic eschatology, gave an eyewitness account of the disaster: "on that fateful day, we found out that some of those who had thrown their own stones made a U-turn instead of moving ahead to take a detour. They came through the route meant for entrance and not exit. They came towards us. They were in a very large group and the road was not spacious enough to allow a free flow of those of us coming to throw stones at the Devil and those who had stoned the Devil. The road could not take those coming and those going. And I discovered that most of those who took the wrong way were Egyptians".

A North American pilgrim, his wife and elderly mother were not able to complete all of their Hajj rites because of Saudi incompetence and callousness.

I performed Hajj this year accompanied by my elderly mother and wife. It was not a pleasant experience. We were shocked by what we saw. We were lucky to survive the stampede at Mina. We had planned to go for the Jamarat a little later because of my elderly mother. A number of my friends witnessed the stampede firsthand although they were not in the middle of the crowd or they too would have perished.

After the stampede, we saw pilgrims' bodies dumped in the streets as if they were garbage. The Saudis just did not care. There were distraught relatives crying and searching for their loved ones but they found little help from the Saudis. I thought since I am from North America, I might be able to talk to Saudi officials. They were not only not responsive but also very arrogant.

We were unable to perform our stoning rites the first day because roads were blocked. Also, the area around the stoning site was such a mess that it was hazardous to go there with my wife and elderly mother. We know of a number of other pilgrims that were too scared to go near the stoning area. What kind of Hajj is it when we cannot even perform our religious rites because of Saudi incompetence? Who is responsible for this?

Saudis did nothing to save us for couple of hours!

Following this tragedy accident Iranian Daily Shahr Ara conducted an interview with 'Haj Hamid Shaker Nijad', one of the survivors of the accident:

When the accident happened?

It was around 8 AM. We were in Mash'arul Haram, a place between Arafat and Mina. Pilgrims stayed in that place for one night and performed the especial rituals of this place. After that we moved toward Mina for Rami Jamarat. We were in our way to Mina but after a while the crowd stopped and didn't move anymore; all people were standing shoulder to shoulder so we were not able to move forward or backward. There was a deplorable condition, no water and no oxygen to breathe.

How long you were kept in this condition?

Maybe around 30 minutes; but if you were here you would understand that you can't stand a quarter under this weather in usual condition. The weather here is too hot so it is not even easy for you to walk and in this horrible condition the time going for you very slow.

How was the reaction of pilgrims in that situation?

Gradually a wave of fear began to rise in all people; we were feeling the fear of death. At first we were thinking that the way should be open soon, but there were high pressures on our chests and we have no oxygen to breath. Fear of death had caused some pilgrims to show certain reactions; some of them were shouting and trying to escape.

You mean there was no way to escape?

There was no way. We were so near to death so we made ourselves ready to die. All the people were in this condition but some of them could control themselves and the other couldn't. At that time Saudi police called on people to stay on their places and urged them to don't move; after that some African pilgrims decided to save their lives, so they pushed other people and tried to reach the tents by climbing them; these reactions brought more stresses among people and so many people were crushed to death under the foot.

As it is appear in the news and photos there were lots of people falling down on each other.

Yes, I saw how people being trampled underfoot in the crowd. There was no place to fall; so by falling of the first person, many people fell on him. I saw someone who was so crushed and all his stomach and intestines had spilled out.

Saudi government blames African pilgrims for this deadly disaster, what do you think about that?

Certainly it was Saudi's fault; they caused this tragedy by blocking the ways. They also did nothing for saving us for 3 or 4 hours. We had no water; if there was a quick medical care the number of victims could never reached this huge amount.

How Saudis were carrying the corpses and the wounded?

It was terrible; very very terrible; they put live people and the dead on each other. They were carrying the corpses and the wounded people by trucks because there were not enough ambulances!!!

Saudi fault for closing roads ahead of tragedy

The worst tragedy in the history of Hajj pilgrimage at the annual Muslim pilgrimage occurred during the ritual of stoning the devil in Mina, just outside of the holy city of Mecca.

“There was crowding. The police had closed all entrances and exits to the pilgrims’ camps, leaving only one,” said Ahmed Abu Bakr, a 45-year-old Libyan who escaped the stampede with his mother.

“I saw dead bodies in front of me and injuries and suffocation. We removed the victims with the police.”

He added that the police at the scene appeared inexperienced. “They don’t even know the roads and the places around here,” he said as others nodded in agreement.

One critic of the redevelopment at the holy sites said despite the large numbers, police were not properly trained and lacked the language skills for communicating with foreign pilgrims, who make up the majority of those on the Hajj.

“They don’t have a clue how to engage with these people,” said Irfan al-Alawi, co-founder of the Mecca-based Islamic Heritage Research Foundation.

“There’s no crowd control,” Mr. Alawi said.

Another witness, 39-year-old Egyptian Mohammad Hassan, voiced worries that a similar incident “could happen again”.

“You just find soldiers gathered in one place doing nothing,” he said.

He also said that he had been insulted because of his nationality, when security men asked him to “come identify his Egyptian corpse”.

“Why are they humiliating us like this? We are coming as pilgrims asking for nothing,” Mr. Hassan said, urging the security forces to “organize the roads” to ensure the smooth movement of people.

Among those confirmed to have been killed in the tragedy were three Kenyans, an unknown number of people from Niger, Chad and Senegal and Nigerians including Bilkisu Yusu, northern Nigeria's first female newspaper editor.

Nigeria's Emir of Kano rejected Saudi Prince Khaled al-Faisal's remarks who blamed some pilgrims with African nationalities for the crush.

He said pilgrims arriving at the Jamarat should not be travelling on the same road as those who have finished the rituals. "They should not cross each other,"

"We are therefore urging the Saudi authorities Muhammad Sansui said.

He called on Saudi authorities not to apportion blame to the pilgrims for not obeying instructions."

A Kenyan survivor who returned to pillars told AFP that his group lost three people. "I can blame the Saudi government because they did not control (the situation). I was there. I survived" a tearful Issac Saleh said, telegraph reported.

Did Iranian pilgrims cause Hajj stampede?

While all Muslims around the world are sorrowing over the death of more than 7000 pilgrims in the hajj of this year, Saudi authorities shamelessly are trying to blame others for this tragic event.

After blaming African pilgrims or calling this accident as a destiny from God, Saudi authorities now are pointing an accusing finger at Iran, where nearly the most of victims are from.

In this regard Saudis have launched some campaigns against Iran under the name of 'Iran kills Pilgrims'.

Asharq Al-Awsat daily which is related to Saudi royal family, today, in an illusory quotation from an unknown Iranian official in Hajj department claimed that Iranian pilgrims are in charge of Mina disaster!

"The Hajj tragedy that has left hundreds of people dead and injured was caused by a group of Iranian pilgrims who failed to follow instructions from Hajj authorities. The accident occurred after a group of around 300 Iranian pilgrims failed to follow orders and caused the accident," Asharq Al-Awsat claimed.

For investigating the authenticity of the news, Ahlul Bayt News Agency (ABNA) has conducted an interview with one of Iranian Hajj officials in Mecca who spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid any threat from Saudis.

ABNA: Asharq Al-Awsat daily claimed that Iranian pilgrims caused the Mina accident as they allegedly moved against the crowd, thus provoking pilgrims to panic. Since you were there, can you tell us if such claims are valid?

Pilgrim: Not true at all. Those who have attended Hajj in recent years know very well that it is impossible to walk against the crowd. Moreover, the incident occurred in the morning of Eid, long before pilgrims even attempted to perform Rami; and so why would anyone be walking back? It makes no sense whatsoever!

ABNA: In past years, pilgrims were able to move in all directions via corridors - was it the same this year?

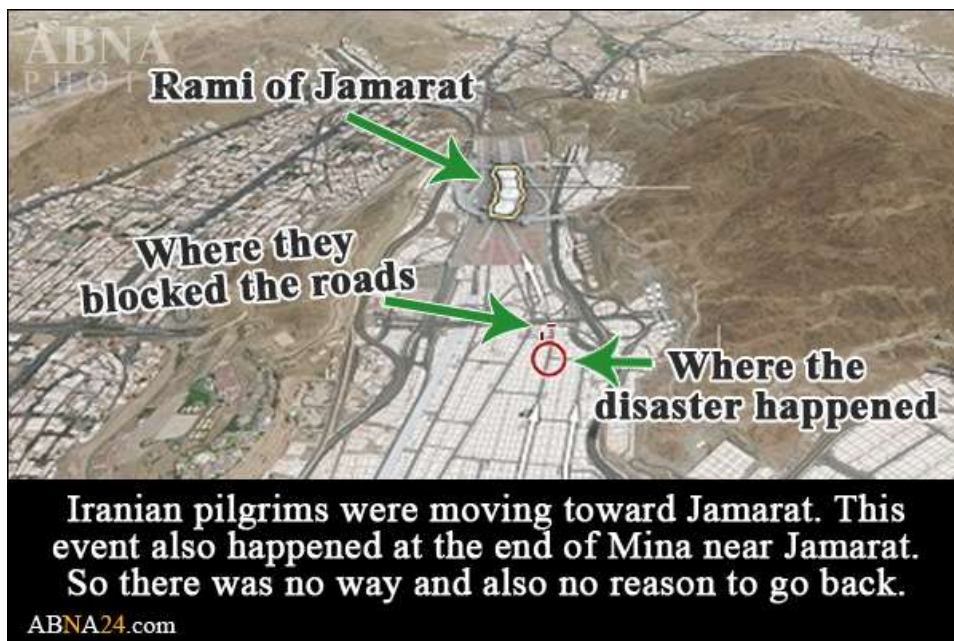
Pilgrim: No actually it wasn't! This year there was no alternative route made available to pilgrims. Everyone had to use the same corridor, at the same time without any alternative provision.

ABNA: Asharq Al-Awsat daily claimed that when the Iranian pilgrims in question travelled from Mozdalafe to Mina they failed to go to their tents. Is that true?

Pilgrim: This is not true. After coming to Mina we went to our tents and ate breakfast; then we moved toward Jamarat. As I said before this event happened near Jamarat not at the entrance of Mozdalafe. There was a one-way road toward the Jamarat. Also, how is it possible for 300 people to move against thousands?!

ABNA: So what prompted this tragedy?

Pilgrim: Unfortunately, Saudi Arabia is responsible! The Saudi police blocked the road, forcing people to move in a very small and closed up road. They sent most of Hajj pilgrims on Street 204, but unfortunately that street was closed out! Police then called on those people in the front to sit and wait. When they sat down those behind thought the way had been opened up and as a result moved forth. People began tripping over one another and mayhem ensued.



ABNA: Do you know why the authorities blocked the road?

Pilgrim: Maybe they did that to prevent people from being accumulated on the bridge of Jamarat, and prevent people from falling off the bridge. Either way the move was callous.

ABNA: How did the Saudi Police react to the accident?

Pilgrim: The Saudi security forces were terrible; they did nothing. They were just watching as people began dying. No efforts were made to help anyone.

ABNA: Asharq Al-Awsat also claimed that the Iranian pilgrims had a schedule and should have gone to Rami, arguing that the heads of the Iranian caravan ignored the schedule and as a result put people in harm's way.

Pilgrim: Also this is not true; in fact there was no such schedule. This is pure fabrication.

ABNA: So why are the Saudi authorities putting those accusations forward?

Pilgrim: Clearly, they don't want to accept any responsibility and so they are trying to deflect blame by finding a scapegoat.

ABNA: To introduce Iran as the main cause of the accident some Saudi sources have also claimed that Iranians were arrested, is it true?

Pilgrim: No, this report is also a baseless rumor.

ABNA: Why so many victims of the tragedy were from Iran and Africa?

Pilgrim: Actually, the tents of African and Iranian pilgrims were set up near where the accident happens which is why they suffered most.

ABNA: As you know Saudi rescue forces arrived 2 or 3 hours after the accident, how can such a thing be possible?

Pilgrim: Unfortunately, the Saudi government wasn't prepared to manage such an event.

I saw little of Islam's compassion, but a lot of Saudi Arabia's neglect.

In an article published on the website of *The Guardian*, British writer and activist Sabreena Razaq Hussain said a number of factors, including Saudi

authorities' treatment of pilgrims, contributed to the deadly crush during Hajj rituals in Mina, near Mecca.

With two million people gathered in one small city for Haj, some discomfort was to be expected. And putting up with it was, I initially thought, an opportunity to exercise the patience so very valued by our faith of Islam and in the holiest of cities. So, we marched on hopefully.

But with the 40-plus degree heat of Makkah, the harsh policing, the aggressive crowds, the chaotic organisation, the pressure was relentless. As the days went on, I couldn't have felt a starker contrast between the spiritual tranquility and contentment experienced within the confines of the Grand Mosque and sites, and the anxiety and distress caused by those policing it.

Prior to my arrival in Saudi Arabia, accompanying my parents on pilgrimage, I was naive enough to believe that one of the richest Muslim countries in the world would be well organised in facilitating the rites of Haj.

Now, back in the UK, I am grateful to be alive and still horrified by what I witnessed.

I fully understand why hundreds of people were crushed to death and I don't believe that "God's will" can be used an excuse.

We'd had a pleasant and spiritual warm-up in the crowded but welcoming streets of Medina. Our group of UK pilgrims remained incredibly organised, my mother's diabetes was stable and my father – an asthmatic – remained mercifully unaffected by the heat. As a pilgrim, daughter and a GP, I was happy and excited to be heading for Makkah. But, the reality was a shock.

Even getting to and from the mosque and other sites was distressing. We had to help wheelchair users on and off the wheelchairs many times, as the pavements were almost knee high with no clear ramps. Considering the number of people with permanent disability or debilitating conditions, this was shocking.

The heat was one of the biggest tests of all, causing many to become exhausted and dehydrated. Yet, only a few of the crowded routes had supplies of water. Some of the common pilgrim routes, for example, where the symbolic stoning of Satan takes place, were devoid of any water supplies other than the presence of young policemen occasionally squirting random pilgrims' faces with water.

The manners and communication skills of the stewards and police deployed in and around the mosque were deplorable. With pilgrims from hundreds of countries, one would think that communication in at least one language other than Arabic would be available. This was not the case.

Not only that, but their manner of aggressively shouting at even the most softly spoken of pilgrims was both needless and a cause of humiliation for those on the receiving end. Nobody had ever spoken to me or my parents in this way before.

It appeared the only thing the very young policemen were authorised to do was shout the Arabic word for "no" and to barricade entry routes as and when they pleased without warning, offering no alternative: clearly a recipe for a crush or a stampede in any of the holy sites.

We were in the mosque when they barricaded an exit and said we couldn't leave until the next prayer finished, an hour and a half later. The physical pressure of hundreds of people had started to build up behind us, causing extreme anxiety and hyperventilation.

I politely asked first, then literally begged the guards to let us exit as my mum's diabetic medication was in our hotel which was quite near the mosque. Her sugar levels were dropping, but it made no difference.

When we did finally find a pilgrim to translate for us, our exit was still refused. When I almost cried and asked, "What happens if she collapses and dies here?", the response was a shrug of the shoulders: if she dies she dies.

Aisha Khan, a Manchester-based business manager who was part of the same tour group, told me a few days later of her anguish after the

authorities would not open the barrier to let her husband through to her, when she felt very unwell. She physically collapsed. Even then, the stewards remained in a small group laughing, not helping him to call for an ambulance. She recalls him running distressed from one side of the road to another, pleading for help.

Actually, making it to an ambulance was another problem. I saw ambulances stuck in the stopped traffic, with no provision for them to manoeuvre or overtake. Having stopped with a group of fellow pilgrims and doctors to help a lady slumped on the ground (looking as if she may be having a heart attack), it was infuriating to find that when the so-called paramedics arrived (they appeared to be drivers in uniforms and not medically trained), they refused to even let us tell them what had happened.

I partially stepped into the back of the ambulance concerned for the poor lady, to find no medical equipment visible whatsoever. We were shooed off and some of her family were left on the street in tears with no idea as to where the ambulance had gone.

There are numerous other distressing experiences I could relate, as can most pilgrims. But the insistence of some that the deaths of hundreds of people represented God's will and were therefore unavoidable is something I refuse to accept.

I believe Islam is based on reason: unless you have done everything you can within your means to actively avoid a bad situation, you cannot use the excuse of it being God's will.

Some people who have made the pilgrimage before describe how things are slowly getting better with time. And the Saudi authorities are denying visas to pilgrims if they have done it in the past five years, in an attempt to control the influx.

Heavy construction work is being completed at the mosque at the moment (the work indirectly led to the deaths of hundreds of people last month when one of the cranes fell through a roof at the Grand Mosque). But radical changes are required.

Much of the poor management of Haj stems from the actual functioning of Saudi Arabia itself. Authorities around the holy sites are clearly not allowed to make independent decisions, while members of the royal family and their guests are treated as VIPs, and therefore have no motivation to push the authorities into creating a safe and workable system.

‘Improvement work indirectly led to the deaths of hundreds of people last month when one of the cranes fell through a roof at the Grand Mosque.’ — Reuters

In Makkah I saw Muslims, but I saw little Islam. I did not see compassion from our hosts, I did not see their concern for our welfare.

I urge all Muslims, pilgrims or otherwise, not to just accept the above as part of the challenge or experience of Haj, but to raise their voices. Write to your local MP, write to the Muslim Council of Britain and utilise your local community groups to express your outrage, and add to the clamour already building in the international arena.

Pilgrimage is supposed to enlighten and change lives, not endanger or end them. It is time to reclaim it.

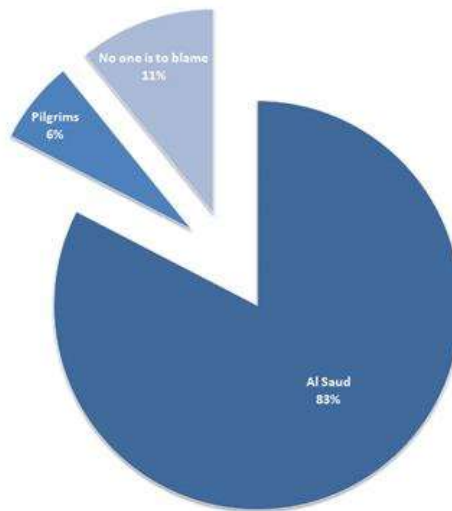
Press TV poll shows Saudi regime was to blame for Mina disaster

A recent Press TV poll shows that an overwhelming majority of people believe that Saudi authorities were to blame for the tragic human crush of September 24 in Mina, near Mecca, during Hajj pilgrimage.

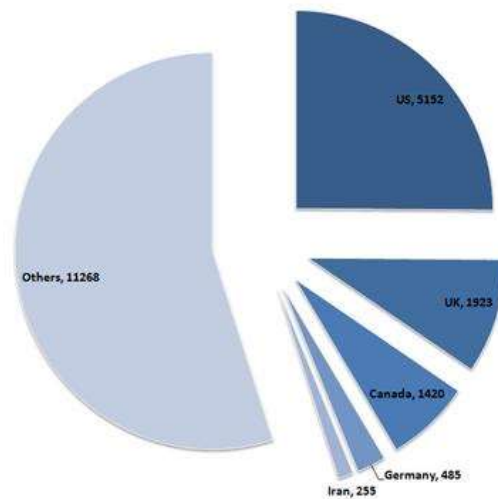
The results of the opinion poll, released on Saturday, showed more than 82 percent of the respondents supported the idea that the Al Saud ruling family was to blame for the disaster.

Eleven percent of a total of 20,503 questioned in the survey, which began on September 27, said no one is to blame for the disaster, while some six

percent agreed with Saudi Arabia that the pilgrims themselves and their indiscipline caused the deadly crush.



The majority of the respondents - or 5,152 people - in the poll were from the United States. In descending order, others included 1,923 from the United Kingdom, 1,420 from Canada, 485 people from Germany and 255 from Iran. Other nationalities constituted more than half of the participants in the survey.



Saudi Arabia claims nearly 770 people were killed in the incident, but officials at Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization say about 4,700 people, including over 461 Iranians, lost their lives.

A new tally by the Associated Press shows that at least 1,453 people were killed in the incident. The AP count is 684 higher than the official toll of 769 provided by Riyadh.

Iran, which says more than 461 of its nationals were killed in the crush, has slammed Riyadh's way of handling the incident and its aftermath, and has laid the blame on the kingdom's "incompetence" in managing the highly-significant ritual.

Investigation

Recommendations by independent experts

Najmedin Meshkati, Professor of Engineering and International Relations at the University of Southern California, who is an expert in accident investigation, recommended in a self-authored opinion piece in the World Post that, "the Saudi government should embark on the immediate creation of an independent investigation commission/panel. This interdisciplinary commission/panel should be chaired by a nationally renowned Saudi statesman or scholar, with members selected from Saudi Arabia and affected countries based on their technical expertise and to include responsible governmental entities, first responder agencies, and academics of requisite disciplines for accident investigation. And it should be empowered by the subpoena power and charged to conduct a comprehensive, systematic and interdisciplinary investigation by employing the system-oriented, robust 'AcciMap' methodology to write the most technically-sound report on the root-causes of this tragedy".

Amer Shalaby is a Professor of Civil Engineering at the University of Toronto's Transportation Research Institute, former Hajj pilgrim, and consultant to Saudi government on crowd management. Shalaby, who specializes in transportation planning for large-scale events, proposes using "smart phones and other static and dynamic sensors" to provide authorities real-time information that could identify potential hot spots during the Hajj. He also suggests that "some of the effective methods of highway traffic flow management, such as flow metering, could be adapted for streamlining crowd flows in Mecca."

Keith Still, Professor of Crowd Science at Manchester Metropolitan University in Britain, who helped redesign the Jamarat (the pillars representing the devil stoned by pilgrims) after a disaster in 2004, said there was criticism at the time that the upgrades at the Jamarat had not been extended to other areas. He said "For complex systems that flow in and out, if you make one change along the way it can have knock-on and

ripple effects elsewhere. Change any one part of system with 3 million people, and there's a danger of an accident like this."

Mohammed Ajmal, a physician specializing in Emergency Medicine and former manager of a medical center set up to treat Indian Hajj pilgrims, details issues with both the design of the Mina tent city and quick access to disaster medical care at the site. Ajmal points to structural design flaws in Mina, calling it a "badly designed death trap—in times of disaster" as it attempts to funnel tens of thousands of people through T intersections, such as the junction of Streets 204 and 223 where the crush took place. Compression Asphyxia is the cause of death for most victims of a crowd collapse, and can occur in within ten minutes; Ajmal notes that Mina's design prevents medical care from arriving within that time frame stating that people at crush site with the commonly seen crowd flow pattern are "destined to die" within minutes before any medical help can reach the site.

Reactions

Governments

In the wake of the Mina disaster, many world leaders sent messages of sympathy and consolation, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Prime Minister of Qatar Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani, King Mohammed VI of Morocco, Emir of Kuwait Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain, and Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi.²

Algeria

- Minister of Religious Affairs and Endowments, Mohamed Aissa, said "We do not doubt the reliability of the security system set up by the Saudi government. We do not deny, either, that the Saudi kingdom is the sole organizer of the hajj, for several years. However, we will require that the whole matter be clarified and that those responsible for this disaster are known and sanctioned. We will demand compensation for the families of the deceased and for the injured".²

Bangladesh

- Religious Affairs Secretary Chowdhury Md Babul Hassan came down heavily upon the Saudi government for its "disrespectful handling" of the bodies after 24 September incident at Mina. "The way the Saudi security officials removed the bodies from the site seemed as if they were dumping garbage." "The stampede has laid bare the Saudi authorities' mismanagements," he said.

India

- Indian President Pranab Mukherjee stated via Twitter that he was "deeply saddened by tragic incident at Mina Thursday, during which a large number of haj pilgrims lost their lives" and that he offered "my sincere condolences to government of Saudi Arabia and families of the deceased pilgrims. I also wish speedy recovery to injured".
- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said "Distressing news from Mecca. Pained at loss of lives due to the stampede. Condolences to families of the deceased and prayers with the injured".

Indonesia

- Indonesian officials criticized Saudi Arabia's response to the disaster, saying authorities in the kingdom prevented their diplomats from seeing initial data and blocked their immediate access to the dead.²
- Indonesia officially offered assistance to help Saudi Arabia in identifying bodies of hundreds of hajj pilgrims killed in Thursday's stampede during the conduction of a hajj procession in Mina, a statement released by Indonesian Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Lebanon

- Tammam Salam, Prime Minister of Lebanon, offered his condolences, stating that he "shared the sorrow with the Iranian nation and officials of the Islamic Republic".
- Hassan Nasrallah, the Secretary General of Hezbollah said that the Saudi regime holds the full responsibility for the Mina incident as it was

the sole manager of the pilgrimage and it has always refused to share this responsibility with anyone else. He stressed that blaming the pilgrims for this tragedy was a simplification of things, and that the consequent accidents in the pilgrimage that take place every year indicate that there is a major problem in Saudi's management.⁴ He further said Saudi Arabia should allow Muslim countries to help the kingdom run the Hajj pilgrimage rituals, emphasising the need for the formation of a Muslim committee to "supervise the management" of the annual Islamic event. He also added that a group of Muslim countries should be formed to probe the fatal stampede during Hajj rites.

Nigeria

- The Nigerian government has dismissed remarks by the Saudi health minister blaming pilgrims for "not following instructions."
- Abdullahi Mukhtar, the Chairman of National Hajj Commission of Nigeria said, "It was not fair for anyone to blame Africans participating at the pilgrimage for the fatal incident" and called on the Saudi authority to include Nigeria in a government investigation into the incident.
- Nigeria's Emir of Kano, Alhaji Muhammad Sanusi II said he would advise Nigerians not to participate in the Stoning of the Devil unless they are assigned quarters close to the Jamarāt pillars. Citing Qur'anic verses and teachings of Muhammad, Sanusi stated that omitting the Stoning of the Devil rite does not lessen the validity of the Hajj pilgrimage. Further explaining his reasoning, Sanusi said, "During the era of Prophet Muhammad, he permitted pilgrims who came on camels to stay in Makkah after Arafat, instead of staying in Mina and sleeping at Muzdalifa. So, if the Prophet can give such grace to some people, just to protect their animals, why didn't our scholars educate our people properly to avoid this untoward hardship and death" and that "If one deliberately refuses to even perform the stoning of the devil ritual, all he needs to do is just to slaughter a ram in order to make up for the loss. So, if this is the situation, why do we go and suffer and die instead of sacrificing a ram?"

- Members of the Nigerian House of Representatives condemned stampede in Mecca during which several lives were lost. The House also demanded for the immediate take-over of the investigation of the incident by international investigators since there were still conflicting reports as to the cause of the incident. It stated that this became necessary in order to prevent future occurrence. During the tragedy, 54 Nigerians lost their lives. One member of the House, Honourable Igbokwue, pointed out that if nothing concrete was done to establish the cause of the stampede, it would definitely happen again.
- The Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar III, urged Saudi authorities to henceforth provide improved safety measures during the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.
- Sheik Sani Yahaya Jingir, chairman of Nigeria's National Ulama'u Council, called on Nigerian government to work with Saudi Arabia to investigate the cause of the incident, and to take action to prevent similar future crowd collapses.

Pakistan

- The New York Times reported that, amid public criticism of the Saudi and Pakistani governments for weaknesses in the official response to the tragedy, the Pakistani government has directed private television networks to "avoid criticizing the Saudis in news programs and talk shows." Pakistani lawmaker Tariq Fazal Chaudhry has defended his government's position, saying the directive was meant to prevent broadcasts from "giving the tragedy a sectarian color."
- Opposition demonstrated a walk-out from the Pakistani Senate against the government's attitude towards Mina stampede. Senator Aitzaz Ahsan said that the ruling party is trying to forget the issue by suppressing it. He said that the government has left Pakistani pilgrims alone in tough times and is trying to cover the situation through Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA). The Deputy Chairman said that the nation should wait for investigative report by Saudi Arabia. There must not be any politics over Mina stampede, he added.

Senegal

- In steering committee, the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) called for the resignation of the government led by Dionne Muhammad Abdallah Boun. Liberals believed that the state authorities have not been up in the "management" of Mina stampede.

Syria

- State-controlled news agency Syrian Arab News Agency said, "The stampede raised questions about the Saudi government's attention to pilgrims' safety despite billions of dollars that Saudi authorities claim to spend to improve Hajj."

Turkey

- Mehmet Görmez, the head of Presidency of Religious Affairs blamed serious management issues at Mecca,⁶ saying, "There was serious negligence by authorities in directing the crowd."
- Though AKP Deputy Chair Mehmet Ali Şahin also criticised the Saudi organisation,⁶ Turkey's President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan defended the Saudi government saying, "I do not sympathise with the hostile statements against Saudi Arabia."⁶ He asserted, "It is not right to have the approach of putting the blame on Saudi Arabia. On the contrary, during the Hajj and Umrah I participated in, I came to observe closely the level of sensibility in the organization work conducted there. Therefore I cannot say 'the organization is wrong'."

Russia

- During a one-on-one meeting at the UN General Assembly, Russian President Vladimir Putin personally expressed his condolences to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and to the families of Iran's deceased Hajj pilgrims.⁶ Putin had earlier sent condolences to Saudi King Salman expressing his "compassion to the families and relatives of the dead and wished an early recovery to the injured".

United Kingdom

- United Kingdom Prime Minister David Cameron tweeted that his "thoughts and prayers are with the families of those killed at the Hajj pilgrimage."
- UK opposition Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn stated that he was "shocked and saddened to hear of today's events in Saudi Arabia. My thoughts are with the friends and families of all those affected as well as Muslims in Britain and around the world."

United Nations

- United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon stated that he "was deeply saddened to learn of the death of more than 700 Hajj pilgrims and of injuries to many others as a result of a deadly incident in the Mina Valley in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia."

United States

- Ned Price, spokesman for the United States National Security Council, speaking on behalf of the Obama administration, said "the United States expresses its deepest condolences to the families of the hundreds of Hajj pilgrims killed and hundreds more injured in the heartbreaking stampede in Mina, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As Muslims around the world continue to celebrate Eid al-Adha, we join you in mourning the tragic loss of these faithful pilgrims."

Vatican

- Pope Francis, leader of the Roman Catholic Church, expressed his "sentiments of closeness in the face of the tragedy that their people suffered today in Mecca".

Non-governmental

- Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah Al ash-Sheikh, Saudi Arabia's top religious leader (appointed to his position by King Fahd

in 1999), told Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and Minister of the Interior, Muhammad bin Nayef, "You are not responsible for what happened. As for the things that humans cannot control, you are not blamed for them. Fate and destiny are inevitable".

- **Irfan al-Alawi**, the executive director of the Islamic Heritage Research Foundation, said that "the disaster was a result of poor management by the government, given the number of past disasters."
- **Madawi al-Rasheed**, a Saudi-Arabian anthropologist and visiting professor at the London School of Economics, said: "There is no accountability. It's shocking that almost every year there is some kind of death toll. The renovation and expansion are done under the pretext of creating more space for Muslim pilgrims, but it masks land grabs and vast amounts of money being made by the princes and by other Saudis. Officials in the kingdom had avoided responsibility in part by citing the Islamic doctrine that anyone who dies during the pilgrimage goes to heaven."
- **Ali al-Ahmed**, a Saudi analyst and current director of the Washington, DC-based Institute for Gulf Affairs think tank blamed the Saudi government's "mismanagement" of the Hajj, saying that "the Ministry of Interior's use of soldiers who have no clue or expertise in managing crowds was the real cause of stampedes. This really has to do with the failure of the Saudi government in organizing this Hajj, and they need to get help from around the world."
- **Saeed al-Shehabi**, a London-based political activist in an interview with Iranian-based television Press TV said that, "In Saudi Arabia; it is good the Saudis are good at war, are good at financing terrorism and extremism, they are bombing Yemen days and nights, yet they cannot manage this annual festival where Muslims are expected to exercise their worship in peace and in harmony and also to discuss their own lively matters that concern Muslims."
- **Salman al-Ouda**, a Saudi cleric said that "Riyadh regime should be held accountable for the crush, adding that Saudi rulers cannot evade

their responsibility by labeling the tragedy as an act of God." He called on media outlets to cover the incident with full transparency.

- **Yasmin Alibhai-Brown**, a Ugandan British author and journalist, seized upon the incident to blast Saudi Arabia for its human rights violations and funding violent Wahhabism in the world. She criticized the Saudi government for blaming the victims in the incident and added "Mecca was once a place of simplicity and spirituality. Today the avaricious Saudis have bulldozed historical sites and turned it into the Las Vegas of Islam – with hotels, skyscrapers and malls to spend, spend, spend. The poor can no longer afford to go there. Numbers should be controlled to ensure safety – but that would be ruinous for profits." She also added that Western leaders are not willing to confront Saudi Arabia because of oil and profits made by arm sales.

- It was reported that an unnamed prince and grandson of **Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud**, founder of Saudi Arabia, citing unrest among the royal family, plummeting oil prices and criticism of Saudi's management of Mecca days after a stampede during Hajj claimed 1,100 lives, said there was a need for a change in leadership. The prince explained a double tragedy in Mecca – the collapse of a crane that killed more than 100, followed by a stampede last week that killed 1,100 – has raised questions not just about social issues, but also about royal stewardship of the holiest site in Islam. "The public are also pushing this very hard, all kinds of people, tribal leaders," the prince added. "They say you have to do this or the country will go to disaster."⁷ However, the authenticity of the grandson and his letter has been questioned.

- **Abbass Schumann**, the Undersecretary of Al-Azhar, Egypt, said that allegations of negligence concerning Saudi's administration and handling of the hajj are "unacceptable". Schumann called for patience pending the conclusion of the investigation by Saudi Arabia, and cautioned against rushing to judgment.

- **Vijay Prashad**, Northampton-based journalist and historian, said that survivors told journalists that Saudi's response to the tragedy was "too little, too late," stressing that Saudi rescuers arrived almost two hours after

the incident. ...much of Mecca, like Saudi Arabia in general, is designed for the VIP and the VVIP. Embarrassingly, Riyadh provides little if any care to ordinary people and it is not the first time that Saudi Arabia has demonstrated disdain for the lives of Muslims. Instead of pouring money into the war, Riyadh should use its wealth to make the Hajj safe not only for the VIPs, but for millions of ordinary Muslims.

- Citing the rumors about the block, **Basma Attasi**, the reporter from Al Jazeera who was present in the ritual, explained "For those who know the area where the stampede occurred, this report seems far from reality. The relatively humble area is far from the entrance to Mina and houses ordinary pilgrims arriving from outside of Saudi Arabia. Important personalities stay in areas close to the entrance and their convoys are assigned separate tunnels and roads to facilitate their movement."
- **Moussa Mara**, former Prime Minister of Mali, said that "the the Divine Will must be evoked after objective analysis, not before. Otherwise no corrective action will be taken and, one day, the same causes will produce the same effects" and called for a thorough investigation and analysis of the Mina crush so as to reduce or eliminate the possibility of such disasters happening again in the future.
- **Toby Craig Jones**, professor of Middle Eastern history at Rutgers University told the The New York Times that he was "not surprised at the Saudi reluctance to give information on what could be a catastrophic case of negligence". Jones stated that the Saudis "want to say it's a technical problem, that order broke down because the victims were unruly. But what if the opposite were true — that the Saudis haven't created a safe environment for the hajj? For the Saudis to be open and honest about what happened would require them to admit it's not a technical problem at all."

Dr. Romesh Gautam, Indian legal expert

A senior lawyer of the Supreme Court of India on Tuesday put the responsibility of the disastrous stampede in Mina on the Saudi Arabia government and called for filing a case against Riyadh in the International Court of Justice (ICJ)

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Dr. Romesh Gautam, said, “The Saudi Arabia is totally responsible for the incident in Mina. Occurrence of the incident is nothing but a total mismanagement of the Hajj ceremony by the Saudi government.”

As per the established conventions, when we visit a particular country, the host country is fully responsible for our safety there. But the Saudi government has totally failed in ensuring the safety and security of the Hajj pilgrims during the current Hajj ceremony”, he added.

Terming the Mina incident as a “pure security lapse”, Dr. Gautam said, “No doubt, the Mina incident in which a large number of people lost their lives was not an act of God. But, it was purely a security lapse and the Saudi government is fully responsible for it.”

“Saudi government should compensate the losses inflicted on the victims of the incident”, the seasoned legal expert added.

Expressing his readiness to fight on behalf of victims of the Mina incident in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against the Saudi government, Dr. Gautam said, “The Saudi government should be tried in ICJ. I fully support this cause and I am ready to help the family members of the victims to get justice. Every country that has lost its nationals in the incident should go to ICJ.”

Emphasizing the need for management of the Hajj ceremony by a joint committee of the member states of the Organizations of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), he added, “Given the repeated disastrous incidents during the Hajj ceremony in the recent years, it would be better if a joint committee of the member states of the OIC manage the ceremony to avert such incidents in future.”

“India has lost a number of its nationals in the Mina incident and New Delhi also should support this idea”, Dr. Gautam added.¹

Sayyed Nasrallah: Saudi Kingdom Responsible for Hajj Tragedy

Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah assured that greetings in the year 2015 are accompanied with condolences due to the tragic incident in Mina that left over 7000 pilgrims dead.

His eminence considered that the Saudi regime holds the full responsibility for the Mina incident as it was the sole manager of the pilgrimage and it has always refused to share this responsibility with anyone else. As he stressed that blaming the pilgrims for this tragedy was a simplification of things, he pointed out that the consequent accidents in the pilgrimage that take place every year indicate that there is a major problem in Saudi's management to the pilgrimage.

In an interview with al-Manar channel His Eminence added that "the countries that were most affected should join the inquiry into the incident."

He further called for the participation of delegates from the countries with the largest number of casualties in the investigation committee in the pilgrimage incident.

As the Resistance Leader heaped scorn on Riyadh for refusing any assistance in handling Hajj affairs, he called the Saudi Kingdom to allow Muslim countries to help the kingdom run the Hajj pilgrimage rituals.

He also emphasized the need for the formation of a Muslim committee to "supervise the management" of the annual Islamic event.

¹ Source: IRNA

Nouri al-Maliki Urges Trial of Perpetrators of Mina Tragedy

Former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki insisted that those responsible for a deadly crush of Hajj pilgrims in Mina, Saudi Arabia, should be brought to justice.

Former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki insisted that those responsible for a deadly crush of Hajj pilgrims in Mina, Saudi Arabia, should be brought to justice.

Maliki said the Riyadh regime should be held accountable for the Mina catastrophe, and blamed “poor management” for the incident.

He also called for an inquiry to ascertain the cause of the crush, stressing that the whole countries whose nationals have died in the incident should oversee the process of investigation.

The Iraqi politician also hailed Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei’s stance towards Saudi Arabia after the Mina deaths.

Maliki said the Leader’s comments “well laid bare the threat of Takfiri Wahhabism originating from Saudi Arabia.”¹

Sheikh Zakzaky, Leader of the Shiite Islamic Movement in Nigeria

Leader of the Shiite Islamic Movement in Nigeria, his eminence, Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky says the management of hajj pilgrimage and the two holy mosques and other sanctities in Saudi Arabia is the responsibility of the Muslims world

Leader of the Shiite Islamic Movement in Nigeria, Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky says the management of hajj pilgrimage and the two holy

¹ Source : **Tasnim**

mosques and other sanctities in Saudi Arabia is the responsibility of the Muslims world, and not exclusive reserve of the Al-Saud royal family.

Sheikh Zakzaky was responding to questions on the unfortunate tragedy in Saudi Arabia, by members of the Media Forum of the Islamic Movement who paid him Eid al-Adha homage at his residence in Gyellesu, Zaria on Saturday.

The Islamic scholar who made similar statement to pressmen in Kaduna during a condolence visit to the family of late Hajiya Bilkisu Yusuf, a victim of the tragedy said the city of Makkah is home to every Muslim believer and whatever therein belongs to all Muslims.

He said, Muslims of all nations should be involved in the management of the hajj operations for effective coordination, welfare and safety of pilgrims.

Sheikh Zakzaky pointed out that, the Al-Saud family cannot be trusted, when its hands are soaked with Muslims' blood in countries such as Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq and Syria.

According to him, the Al-Saud prince whose convoy caused the tragedy and all those complicity in the crime should be punished by death, as they caused the death of thousands of innocent pilgrims.

“For the government of Saudi Arabia to blame pilgrims for killing themselves is ridiculous and a form of human degradation, which is also criminal. They are saying this in order to cover up the real cause of the tragedy”.

Sheikh Zakzaky further explained that, if the Saudi government could describe the crane tragedy at the precincts of the holy Ka'abah as accidental, “We wonder why the crane would be left hanging over the heads of millions of pilgrims, and only to crash on them on September”.

“The Saudi authorities cannot fool the world or exonerate itself from the heinous crime and monumental tragedy, as the world knows who is killing their brethren in Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq and Syria”, said Sheikh Zakzaky.

Niaz Hussain Naqvi, Pakistani Shia cleric

A senior Pakistani Shia Cleric says that Saudi Arabia is responsible for the management of Hajj related activities so responsibility of Mina tragedy falls on the shoulders of Saudi government.

‘Niaz Hussain Naqvi’, vice president ‘Wafaqul Madaris Shia Pakistan’ said that Saudi Arabia should accept the responsibility and apologize to the whole Muslim world over its mismanagement which resulted in Mina incident.

“Saudi government had appointed inexperienced and incompetent staff at Mina, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of Haji pilgrims,” he said.

He went on to say that at the moment there is uncertainty over the cause of the Mina stampede.

“Instead of accepting the responsibility of the incident, Saudi Arabia has praised the performance of its Hajj staff. They are not ashamed over Mina tragedy which is very unfortunate,” he added.

He said that Saudi government did not show any respect for the dead bodies of Hajj pilgrims, martyred in Mina tragedy. “No doubt the government of Saudi Arabia is incompetent and cannot handle Hajj gathering alone,” he said.

Niaz Hussain Naqvi also slammed the Pakistani government for warning news channels against any criticism of Saudi Arabia. “The Pakistani channels were only trying to inform the people about Mina tragedy facts and it was a step in the right direction, but the government issued a warning against them which is a highly condemnable act,” he said.

The cleric said that Saudi Arabia does not agree with the suggestion of independent probe into the Mina tragedy because it will reveal their incompetence in dealing with Hajj matters.

He added that the holy sites of Mecca and Medina belong to entire Muslim Ummah, therefore, all the Muslim countries in the world should have joint control of all the matters related to Hajj.

Maulana Kalbe Jawad, Senior Indian cleric

Shia Cleric and Friday prayer leader of Lucknow, Maulana Kalbe Jawad blamed presence of a Saudi prince for stampede that killed over 1500 pilgrims during Hajj in Mina, near Mecca.

He also supported demand of Iran that Saudi Arabia hand over control of the annual pilgrimage to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the world's largest body of Muslim nations.

Addressing a gathering of Shia after Bakrid (al-Adha) prayer, Mr. Jawad, who is also general secretary of Majlis-e-Ulama-e-Hind, an all India body of clerics, said the prince came in his car along with the convoy to throw pebble for the 'stoning of devil' ritual.

Referring to a video gone viral on social media, he said seven out of 13 roads were closed due to presence of the prince and his convoy, forcing pilgrims from different directions to converge at a point, leading to panic and stampede.

Demanding action against those responsible for the tragedy, Jawad said the video shows the prince was throwing pebble from inside the car. Saudi Arabia has rejected Iran's allegation on the prince.

Jawad reiterated that agitation against corruption in Shia Central Wakf Board, UP would continue. He also alleged that the recent fire at Sunni Waqf Board office was a conspiracy to destroy evidences of corruption. "Like Sunni Waqf Board, corrupt elements in the government would have also destroyed evidences of corruption in Shia Wakf Board but the pressure mounted by Shia community to order CBI probe prevented them from doing so," he claimed.

Abdul Alim Musa, Imam of Masjid al-Islam

Press TV has interviewed the imam of Masjid al-Islam in Washington, Abdul Alim Musa, to discuss Saudi Arabia's mismanagement of Hajj rituals, which led to the crush in Mina, near Mecca.

Musa says Saudi Arabia has a long history of ignoring the safety of the Muslim pilgrims, adding that Saudi police brutality left at least 400 dead in 1987 and another 1,400 pilgrims were killed in a crush the next year.

He says Saudi Arabia should be stripped of the authority to run the Hajj pilgrimage, because it does not pay attention to the pilgrims' safety, adding that while "Mecca should be a haven of peace and tranquility," it has turned – under Saudi management – to an "area of turmoil."

The imam refers to Al Saud's negligence toward Islamic values and the need for neutrality during the most important pilgrimage in Islam, saying that Riyadh refused to allow Yemeni Muslims to travel to Saudi Arabia in order to perform this year's Hajj rituals.

Musa expresses hope that other Muslim nations would be able to take the responsibility of running the Hajj rites in their hands in the future to avoid catastrophes like the recent crane crash in Mecca and the deadly crush in Mina.¹

Saudi cleric: Riyadh regime responsible for Hajj Tragedy

A Saudi cleric says the Riyadh regime should be held accountable for the crush that killed hundreds of Hajj pilgrims at Mina, adding that Saudi rulers cannot evade their responsibility by labeling the tragedy as an act of God.

In a video that circulated on social networking sites, Salman bin Fahd bin Abdullah al-Ouda, rejected the views that the repeated incidents during the Hajj pilgrimage could be justified simply by describing them as an act of God, which is inevitable.

¹ Source: PressTV

The cleric further emphasized that Islam attaches great significance to protecting people's lives and providing security during religious rituals, calling on Muslim countries to make efforts to that effect.

Ouda also called on media outlets to cover the incident with full transparency.

The remarks by the Saudi sheikh comes as Saudi Arabia's top religious leader Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah ash-Sheikh attempted to take the responsibility for the Mina stampede off the Riyadh regime's shoulders, claiming that the incident was beyond human control.

Sheikh made the remarks in a Saturday meeting with Saudi Interior Minister Mohammed bin Nayef, whom he said was not to blame for the deaths of hundreds of pilgrims outside the holy city of Mecca earlier this week.

He added that pilgrims must stick to "the rules and regulations taken by the security personnel... In doing so, they protect their lives, their security and facilitate their performing of the rituals."¹

Shaykh Abdul-Naser al-Jabri, a Lebanese Sunni scholar

A Lebanese Sunni scholar pointed out the inadequacy of the House of Saud in managing the Hajj pilgrimage and emphasized that the Mina case should be reviewed by appropriate courts in Arab and Muslim countries.

Shaykh Abdul-Naser al-Jabri, a Lebanese Sunni scholar and the Secretary-General of the Lebanese Ummah Movement, called for an investigate into the tragic stampede in Mina which led to the deaths of 4,000 Hajj pilgrims last Thursday, and said: "In the past, we suggested to the authorities in charge of the Hajj pilgrimage that Islamic countries should participate in the Hajj and provide security for the pilgrims but unfortunately we have not heard an answer from them in this regard."

¹ Source: Ahlul Bayt News Agency

He added that participation in the management of Hajj is necessary and added that it is common in all countries which are affected by disasters that people from all over the world help them. We have seen this in the aftermath of severe earthquakes. "Besides Saudi Arabia's inability to deal those killed or injured in the stampede incident, they haven't allowed other countries to investigate the incident either," he said.

He said that no country can manage the Hajj ceremony alone, so Saudi Arabia must get help from other Islamic countries.

Shaykh al-Jabri pointed out that much larger gatherings than Hajj have been held without incident throughout the world.

The Lebanese Sunni scholar referred to the Holy Quran, wherein God Almighty states: "Cooperate in piety and Godwariness, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression" [5:2] and said Islamic countries' participation in the hajj pilgrimage is quite natural and represents collaboration among Muslims.

His Eminence stated that Saudi Arabia is responsible for the incident in Mina and added that they cannot deny and reject responsibility for this incident and throwing the blame on the shoulders of the pilgrims is impossible because they were only seeking to perform the Hajj rituals.

Shaykh al-Jabri called for this incident to be examined by Islamic and Arab courts and organizations and stressed that it should not be raised in Western countries because we don't expect anything else besides evil and the destruction by the West so how can we bring forward an Islamic case to them. "The case should be heard in Islamic and Arab countries and in a strong manner," he said.

He invited Islamic scholars to support the oppressed countries such as Yemen, Syria, Libya and Iraq and said Islamic countries in the region are responsible for maintaining the blood of Muslims in the region and stated

that Arab governments must stand against the arrogant powers in both the East and the West.¹

Pakistani Senator Calls for Int'l Prosecution of Saudi Arabia

Pakistan People's Party Senator Farhatullah Babar underlined the need for an international prosecution of the Saudi regime for its disrespect for the victims of the Mina tragic incident.

Pakistan People's Party Senator Farhatullah Babar underlined the need for an international prosecution of the Saudi regime for its disrespect for the victims of the Mina tragic incident.

"The insult to the dead Hajj pilgrims of Mina tragedy should be dealt with at an international level," Senator Babar said on Wednesday.

He reiterated that investigations into the cause of the Mina incident are very crucial and the Saudi regime should be accountable to the Muslim countries about it.

A stampede during one of the last rituals of the Hajj season on September 24 killed at least 4,173 people and left thousands wounded.

The stampede occurred during the ritual known as "stoning the devil" in the tent city of Mina, about two miles from Mecca.

Pakistan is among those nations who have lost the largest number of nationals in the stampede, and Islamabad's leniency towards Saudi Arabia over the Mina crush has angered the Pakistani people.

Reports from Pakistani media and journalists on September 28 revealed that the country's intelligence body, ISI, has issued serious warnings to all the country's media outlets to avoid conducting interviews with pilgrims

¹ Source : **Rasa**

and their families about the lethal incidents in Mecca this year or releasing figures of those who have lost their lives or gone missing in the stampede.

A senior Pakistani religious leader on September 28 called on Islamabad to declare the real number of the Hajj pilgrims killed during the Hajj stampede in Mina.

"The secrecy concerning the true number of victims of Mina incident not only does not solve anything, but is also make the situation more complicated; therefore the Pakistani government should announce the exact number of Pakistani pilgrims killed in Hajj rituals in Mina," Sahibzada Abu-al-Khair Muhammad Zubair, President of Pakistan's Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP), said.

A Pakistani citizen has also filed a complaint against the Islamabad government for not declaring true figures of the Pakistani nationals who have died or gone missing in the Thursday stampede in Mina near Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

Mahmoud Akhtar Naghavi has sued 14 senior Pakistani officials, including prime minister and religious affairs minister, for not providing accurate information on the number of the Pakistanis killed in Mina, the Urdu-language Express newspaper reported on September 28.

"The (Pakistani) government is duty-bound to publish a list of the names and the real number of the victims and the missing Hajj pilgrims in order to remove concerns among the families of the pilgrims," the daily quoted Naghavi as saying.

Muhammad Zubair voiced regret over the prevailing situation in Mecca, and said, "This is very regretting that the Hajj pilgrims lost their lives for the presence of a Saudi royal family member; if this is true. The Saudi royal family is assassin of the Hajj pilgrims."

Sources revealed on September 24 that the convoy of Saudi Arabia's Deputy Crown Prince and Defense Minister Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud caused panic among millions of pilgrims and started the stampede.

"The large convoy of Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud, the King's son and deputy crown prince, that was escorted by over 350 security forces, including 200 army men and 150 policemen, sped up the road to go through the pilgrims that were moving towards the site of the 'Stoning the Devil' ritual, causing panic among millions of pilgrims who were on the move from the opposite direction and caused the stampede," several Arab papers, including the Arabic language al-Diyar newspaper, disclosed on September 24.

"That's why the ruler of Mecca has distanced himself from the case, stressing that the issue should be studied and decided by the King," it added.

Eye witnesses said earlier that the Saudi police and security forces had closed two of the few roads to the stone column that were to be used by millions of pilgrims to do the 'Stoning the Devil' ritual on September 24.

Saeed Ohadi, the head of Iran's Hajj organization, accused Saudi Arabia of safety errors and mismanagement.

He said for "unknown reasons" the paths had been closed off near the scene of the symbolic stoning of the devil ritual where the accident later took place.

"This caused this tragic incident," he told the Iranian state television.

Eyewitness accounts said that even after incident the Saudi security and military forces closed all paths leading to the scene and the bodies of pilgrims have piled up on each other.¹

Political motives behind Hajj stampede: Pundit

Press TV has interviewed Mauri Saalakhan, director of the Peace THRU Justice Foundation from New York, and Lawrence J. Korb, with the Center for American Progress from Washington, to discuss Saudi Arabia's

¹ Source : FNA

mismanagement during this year's Hajj pilgrimage, which left thousands dead and wounded in Mina crush.

Saalkhan believes that there are some political motives behind this year's Hajj tragedy, linking the September 24 incident to the ongoing developments in the Middle East.

He adds the Saudi kingdom introduces itself as the custodian of the holy mosques, which means the Saudis are expected to shoulder responsibility of the deadly incidents during the Hajj pilgrimages and meet the legitimate demands of Muslim countries in this respect.

The Saudis should allow a joint commission of international Muslim organizations to discover the realities and causes of the stampede incident in Mina, he notes.

Referring to the fatal incident of Hajj pilgrimage in 1987, when he himself performed the Islamic rite and witnessed misbehavior of the Saudi security forces toward Muslim pilgrims, the activist adds that the Saudi authorities have a long history of blaming pilgrims for the incidents happening in the Hajj rituals.

Korb, for his part, believes there is a need for an impartial investigation into deadly tragedies during the Hajj pilgrimage, as it is not the first time that pilgrims die during the most important Islamic ritual.

He proposes that the Saudis could limit the quota of every Muslim nation to dispatch fewer pilgrims to Hajj in order to prevent such an incident in the future.

Saudi Arabia deployed thousands of security forces and medical staff for emergency situation, but such a crush in Mina proves that there were some people who did not carry out the policies they were supposed to, he mentions. ¹

¹ Source: PressTV

Pope expresses solidarity with Muslims after Mina tragedy



While in New York, Pope Francis expressed solidarity with Muslims after the devastating stampede in Saudi Arabia.

"I want to express the closeness of the church in the face of the tragedy people suffered in Mecca," said the pontiff at the start of his homily during prayers at St Patrick's Cathedral.

"In this moment of prayer, I unite and join in prayer with our almighty God and merciful father," he added.

UN chief 'deeply saddened' at deaths in wake of stampede



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. UN Photo

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed deep sadness to learn of the death of more than 7000 Hajj pilgrims, as well as of injuries to many others caused by a deadly incident in Mina Valley, near Mecca, in Saudi Arabia.

“This tragic incident is all the more distressing as it took place on the first day of the Holy Eid Al-Adha marking the end of the annual Hajj season, said the UN chief in a statement released by his spokesperson in New York.

In the statement, the Secretary-General extends his sincere condolences to the families of the victims and expresses his sympathies to all the Governments concerned.

Jack Straw condoles Iran on Hajj tragedy victims

Former British Foreign Secretary and former head of Iran-UK parliamentary friendship group, Jack Straw, in a message condoled Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Iranian nation and the bereaved families of the September 24 Hajj tragedy victims on the passing away of their beloved ones.

The message, addressed to Iran's Charge D'Affaires, Mohammad-Hassan Habibollah Zadeh, read that he was very sorry over loss of all the people in Mina catastrophe.

He said it was a heinous event for all Iranians, including women and children.

Addressing Habibollah Zadeh, Straw added that he should personally condole on loss of Foreign Ministry officials.¹

Aftermath

The 2015 Mina Crush disaster has increased tensions in the already-strained relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran, led to calls from politicians in a number of Muslim nations for changes in oversight of Mecca and the Hajj, and bolstered opposition to King Salman among the senior members of the Saudi Arabian royal family.

Criticism of Saudi control of Hajj

Politicians and religious leaders in a number of Muslim countries have cited the 2015 Mina disaster as reason for control of the Hajj be handed over to either different nation or to pan-Islamic organization.⁸ Mehmet Ali Sahin Deputy Chair of Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) criticised the Saudi organisation, and claimed that Turkey could do a better job than Saudi Arabia at organising the Hajj pilgrimage, calling for Turkey to be entrusted with its management. Nouri al-Maliki, former Prime

¹ Source : IRNA

Minister of Iraq, proposed that the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) should take over administration of the Hajj. Mohammad Emami Kashani, an Iranian Ayatollah, also called for transfer of the control of the Hajj to the OIC,⁸ stating "Saudi Arabia is incapable of organising the pilgrimage. The running of the Hajj must be handed over to Islamic states." Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hezbollah stated that Saudi Arabia should allow Muslim countries to help the kingdom run the Hajj pilgrimage rituals, emphasising the need for the formation of a Muslim committee to "supervise the management" of the annual Islamic event. The Saudi government rejected such calls; Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal stated Saudi control over the Hajj was "a matter of sovereignty and privilege and service". A detailed account of the criticisms made by some of the world's most renowned leaders will follow.

Increased Saudi-Iranian tensions

Government and religious leaders of Iran—which lost at least 461 citizens in the Mina disaster—have been harshly critical of Saudi Arabia demanding that the management of Hajj affairs be handed over to a committee of members from various Muslim countries. Saudi leaders have in turn rejected the call and claimed that Iran was attempting to take advantage of a tragedy for political purposes.

In the immediate aftermath of the Mina crush, both Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, and Iranian President, Hassan Rouhani, had harsh words for the Saudi government and blamed Saudi Arabia for the disaster. President Rouhani suggested that the Mina crush could be the result of the Saudi government moving their best troops to Yemen, and leaving Hajj crowd control in the hands of less experienced soldiers. While Ebrahim Raisi, Iran's State Prosecutor claimed the disaster had been caused by the Saudi officials blocking a road so as to clear a path for a Saudi convoy, and that the House of Saud should be held responsible under international law. Iranian legal experts later decided that Iran could not bring such a

case before the International Court of Justice or the International Criminal Court due to jurisdictional issues. Iranian officials also accused Saudi Arabia with kidnapping Iranian diplomat, Ghazanfar Roknabadi, who went missing during the Hajj, until his body was finally identified on 25 November 2015. On November 24, 2014, Iran announced that it was forming its own fact-finding committee to investigate the disaster. Iran rightly claimed that the death toll of the disaster far exceeded what had been reported, and that between 4,700 and 7,500 pilgrims actually died.

The Saudi government, however, gave its own account which was in clear contradiction with the reports transmitted by mainstream media across the world. The Saudi rhetoric was not acceptable to world's Muslim leaders since the truth was something other than what the Saudi officials were claiming.

Iranian Officials' Reaction

Iranian leader declares 3-day national mourning

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei declared three days of national mourning over the death of Hajj pilgrims, including at least 461 Iranians, in a stampede incident in Mina near the city of Mecca.



In his message on Thursday evening the Iranian Leader expressed condolences to the bereaved families of all those killed in the incident, specially the Iranians, and declared three days of national mourning in the country.

Meantime, Ayatollah Khamenei blasted the Saudi government, saying that Riyadh should accept its responsibility for "mismanagement" and adoption of "improper measures".

"Mismanagement and improper measures that caused this tragedy should not be overlooked," he said, stressing that "the Saudi government is

required to accept its heavy responsibility for this bitter incident and meet its obligations in compliance with the rule of righteousness and fairness".

Supreme Leader's remarks on Mina disaster

The Leader's remarks on the Mina disaster at the start of his course to clerics at the post-jurisprudence level (2015/09/27 - 14:49)

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

After a long holiday, today, we start our discussion; however, our hearts are filled with sorrow and filled with grief because of this bitter incident that took place at Mina and turned the Eid [al-Adha] into [a] mourning [occasion] in true sense of the word. Every year, in the season of Hajj, just like these days when Hajj rites and Hajj rituals have ended, the country is in [a state] of general jubilation; Hajjis come back [from Hajj pilgrimage], [and] families are happy, [because] their fathers, their children [and] their spouses are coming back [from Hajj pilgrimage]; families are happy that [their Hajjis] have come back, have done the Hajj pilgrimage, [and] have succeeded.

After all, the world of Islam has question[to ask]. More than 1,000 [people] killed from various Islamic countries in a single incident, is this a joke? [And only] God knows how many hundreds [of people have] been killed from our country! Now, it is yet not clear where the missing [persons] are; it is possible that a great number of these [missing persons] are also [among] those who have lost their lives. Is [having] a few hundreds [of people] killed in an incident – [especially] in Hajj incident – a small matter? Is this a joke? The Islamic world must think [of a solution] for this [problem]; and the first point is that Saudis must accept their responsibility and meet the requirements for accepting this responsibility. That instead of apologizing to the Islamic Ummah and instead of apologizing to families [of victims of this incident] they start [and] keep incessantly attributing things to this and that and incriminate [others] and the likes of that, will get [them] nowhere and nations will seriously follow up [on this issue]; this issue will not be forgotten. I hope, God willing, God will determine what is good [for all of us].

Leader urges Muslim world to probe into Hajj tragedy

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says Saudi Arabia has not made good on its obligations regarding the recent deadly Hajj incident, saying Iran's possible response will be "tough and harsh." Here is a short excerpt from the leader's speech delivered in graduation ceremony of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army cadets (2015/09/30 - 22:52):

As for the recent incidents at Mina, I have to say a word. [This incident] was a mourning [occasion and a] calamity for us for two reasons: [one] reason was [because] hundreds of our dear Hajj pilgrims lost their lives unjustly [and] some of them even [died] thirsty. Their families were happy that their dear ones would come back from Hajj [pilgrimage] and had opened their arms for them, [but] now, they must face their dead bodies; this is a great calamity. The [total] number of our dead [pilgrims] is not known yet, [and] it may add up to hundreds of people. This is the first reason that [our] nation is woe-stricken in this issue in the true sense of the word.

[The] second [reason is] for the Islamic world; as I have been informed, there have been more than 5,000 [people] killed from the Islamic world and from different countries. Hajj is a place of security; [as the Quran says:] "[Remember] when We made the House a place of assembly for men and a place of security." The Quran says, "We made the House a place of assembly" and a place of reference for the Islamic Ummah and "a place of security." [Therefore,] it must be secure; [but] where is security? Is this security that during the Hajj rituals, the lives of human beings are encroached upon?

Investigation must be carried out [into this incident]; I do not have any premature judgment about the reasons of this incident [but] there must certainly be people from the Islamic world - including from our country - to go [and] investigate up-close, [and] make it clear what has been the reason of the incident; there is no argument about this. The argument is about duties that every government, every nation, every physician, every

nurse, [and] every healthy [and] spiritual [and] kind human being must shoulder in the face of a group of injured [people]; these [duties] have not been observed. In hospital, in cold [storage] container, [and] in the desert, the condition of patient has not been taken into account, the condition of a distressed human being has not been taken into account, [and] the condition of thirsty [people] has not been taken into account. Today, they are problems for the transfer of their purified bodies back to the country; officials of our country are following up [on this issue]; [they] have been active, have been working, [and] are making [any possible] effort; such works and activities must continue, but officials of the country of Saudi Arabia are not fulfilling their duties, but in some cases, are doing exactly the opposite of their duties; [and] are doing mischief.

If our country and our nation wants to show reaction against trouble making and mischievous elements, their conditions will not be good; we have so far shown self-restraint. In many issues we have shown self-restraint; [otherwise] the Islamic Iran's hand is more open than many others, [and] our capabilities, [and] our potential are more than many; they know that if they wanted to challenge the Establishment of the Islamic Republic, they would not cope in any arena. We just observed the Islamic courtesy, [and] showed respect for brotherhood among the Islamic Ummah; [otherwise] we are able to show reaction. If we decided to show reaction, our reactions would be also tough [and] would be also harsh.

They have [already] tried the Iranian nation; in the issue of the eight-year war [against Iraq's aggression], all of these - these surrounding [countries] - and all the powers of the East and the West supported and defended an evil [and] corrupt element and they were all slapped [in the face]; that corrupt element was also slapped [in the face] and following him all those who had supported [him] were slapped [in the face]; [so, they] have known Iran; [and even] if they have not, they [must] know it [now].

Today, tens of thousands of our dear ones are still in Mecca and in Medina, [and] are in Hajj rituals; a slight disrespect to them; will elicit [our] reaction; [Saudis must know that] not fulfilling their duties toward the purified bodies of our dear ones who lost their lives in Hajj, will elicit

reaction; [they must] take care to fulfill their duties. Of course, this will not be the end [of this case], [and these] issues must be followed up on. The Islamic Republic is not for oppression, nor it accepts oppression [from anybody]; we do not oppress anybody [and] do not accept oppression from anybody. We believe that human beings - including Muslim and non-Muslim - have rights; we consider them as having right and will not encroach upon that right. However, if somebody wanted to encroach upon the right of the Iranian nation and the Islamic Republic of Iran, we know how to deal with them; [and] we will deal strongly [with them]. Thank God, the ability [to do this] exists; the Iranian nation is a powerful nation, [and] the Islamic Republic is a stable and established power and we can defend ourselves.

Mina incident must not be forgotten

Leader of the Islamic Republic has criticized silence of western powers claimants of human rights on Mina incident.



Leader of the Islamic Republic has criticized silence of western powers claimants of human rights on Mina incident.

Ayatollah Khamenei addressed a meeting of Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization officials and staff on Monday, where he specifically demanded more dynamism in part of the diplomacy machinery of the country in addressing Mina incident 'in assertive manner as possible.'

"The bitter event of Mina incident was a test for our piety; however, we should not forget the event itself and the policy of silence by the hegemonic powers of the west claimants to the human rights on this great tragedy; as to our own responsibility, the Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization and country's diplomacy should address the issue strongly," he emphasized.

"The hosting Saudi Arabia is the first responsible body for the death of 7,000 Muslims; we expected to see a single voice of objection by the Islamic world; however, no other voice was heard than that of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and even governments whose citizens had died in the event, averted their heads to the issue," Ayatollah Khamenei lamented. "Addressing the issue in more responsible manner was a serious demand from the diplomacy arrangement of the country to prevent in the future any similar events from happening; the face evidence shows that the lackluster performance by the host country was the most effective factor; in any condition, this is not a political issue, but the lives of thousands of Muslims while observing their Hajj rituals in the attire of ihram are at stake, which should be addressed," he demanded.

"Those countries which stir media hype for death of even single citizen adopted a policy of silence, which would serve their ally state's interest best; if they are honest in their claims, they should seek and demand identification of the possible perpetrators of the event and their retribution," he emphasized.

"Any campaign to keep the issue alive is to raise the issue in international community which should target human rights organizations and western governments as if they had been accomplice in the event," concluded the Leader.

Supreme Leader attends memorial ceremony for Mina tragedy victims

The Supreme Leader on Sunday attended memorial service held at Imam Khomeini Hosseinieh to pray for souls of the Hajj pilgrims died in Saudi Arabia.



The Supreme Leader on Sunday attended memorial service held at Imam Khomeini Hosseinieh to pray for souls of the Hajj pilgrims died in Saudi Arabia.

A large number of officials and people mourning the high magnitude deaths were present in memorial service.

Iran demanded the Saudi government to honor international responsibility envisaged by the International Customary Law and punish the agents involved in creating such a tragedy and hold formal inquiry in presence of representatives from Iran and the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation.

Iranian government appealed to the United Nations to hold inquiry to the human tragedy in Saudi Arabia. Iran attributed the crime to the Saudi government in line with the International Customary Law.

104 bodies of dead Iranian pilgrims arrived at Tehran's Mehrabad Airport early Saturday and another 114 bodies arrived on Sunday.

Mina fact-finding body must be formed: senior Iranian cleric

A fact-finding committee must be formed to investigate the recent deadly crush during the Hajj rituals in Mina, outside the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, Supreme Leader's representative for Hajj and Pilgrimage Affairs said.



Based on the remarks made by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and other Iranian officials, a fact-finding committee

must be established to look into the Mina disaster, Hojjatoleslam Seyyed Ali Qazi Askar, the Leader's representative for hajj and pilgrimage affairs, said.

"Saudi Arabia should engage in special cooperation in determining the main culprit of the Mina incident," Qazi-Askar stated, adding that the guilty must be dealt with "decisively".

The crush happened on September 24 after two large masses of pilgrims fused together. Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization puts the death toll from the crush at around 4,700 people, including 461 Iranians. Saudi Arabia, however, says some 770 people have been killed.

Iran says Saudi Arabia's incompetence in handling the safety at the rituals caused the deadly incident.

The Iranian cleric also said two groups of people lost their lives in Mina; the first died in the early moments of the tragic event due to high temperature and the crowd's pressure, and the second succumbed to their injuries due to untimely medical care.

Qazi Askar further referred to Ayatollah Khamenei's "decisive and brave" stance following the calamity, saying that the Leader's remarks caused Saudi officials to accelerate the process of repatriating the bodies of Iranian victims.¹

¹ Source : **PressTV**

President Rouhani offers condolences over tragedy in Mina

Upon landing in New York, President Rouhani issued a statement on the tragic death of pilgrims near Mecca.

Upon landing in New York, President Rouhani issued a statement on the tragic death of pilgrims near Mecca.

President Rouhani issued a condoling statement upon landing in New York late on Thursday.

'The passing away of our beloved Hajj pilgrims beside the Muslim Ummah and injury of many others in Mecca is the source of regret,' the Iranian president said in his message.

Rouhani meanwhile called the Saudi government responsible for the death of thousands of Hajj pilgrims in Mina near Mecca.

President also tasked his First Vice President Eshagh Jahangiri with forming a special committee to follow-up the causes of the tragedy and plan immediate assistance as soon as possible. He asserted that dispatching relief and rescue teams and in case of need sending airplanes to Saudi Arabia, dealing with the affairs of the Hajj pilgrims, injured of the incident, and dispatch of the deceased pilgrims to the country tops agenda of following up the Mina incident.

Jahangiri is also asked to inform the Iranian nation especially those who have lost dear ones in the incident on the findings of the committee.

Rouhani has also tasked provincial governors to meet with families of the deceased pilgrims to offer Presidential condolences. ¹

¹ Source: Mehr

President Rouhani at UN: Mina deadly disaster caused by Saudi's incompetence

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani says the recent deadly crush in Saudi Arabia's Mina was the result of Saudi authorities' incompetence and mismanagement.



The president made the remark in his speech to the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York on Monday.

He said the feelings of millions of Muslims being hurt by the incident amounts to spiritual loss which cannot be compensated for simply by material means.

“The public opinion demands that Saudi authorities discharge, without delay, their international responsibility in providing immediate consular access for the quick identification and returning of the bodies [of the diseased],” said the president.

“It is also required that the necessary conditions be provided for [conducting] an independent and precise inquiry into the causes of the [Mina] disaster and [working out] methods for preventing a repeat of that in the future,” President Rouhani added.

Iran to Continue Efforts to Shed Light on Mina Tragedy

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani made assurances that his administration is resolved to pursue the issue of a recent deadly crush in Mina, Saudi Arabia, in which hundreds of Hajj pilgrims, including 461 Iranians, were killed.

Addressing a huge gathering of people in the northern city of Sari on Monday, President Rouhani expressed sympathy with the bereaved families of the victims of the Mina tragedy and praised the stance taken by Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on the issue.

“The duty of the (Iranian) administration to the victims has not been discharged completely,” he noted.

“Our follow-up efforts in diplomatic, political and even legal areas will continue until all aspects of the Mina disaster are clarified,” the president said, adding that his administration is duty-bound to make the efforts.

Iranian FM condoles families of Mena victims

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif extended his condolences to the families of the victims of the stampede incidents of Mena rituals during the Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca.

‘This incident brought a wave of grief with itself concurrent with the auspicious occasion of Eid al-Adha in Muslim countries and the Islamic Republic of Iran,’ Zarif said in his message addressed to the families of deceased Iranian Hajj pilgrims on Thursday.

He also sympathized with the victims of other Muslim countries, and said, ‘In addition to formation of a special headquarters at the foreign ministry, I have started intensive political contacts from New York to expedite the

identification of the victims and immediate treatment of the injured people.'

Iran's Foreign Ministry Condolences Nation on Mina Tragedy

Iranian Foreign Ministry stressed that the dimensions and circumstances of the deadly Hajj crush outside the holy city of Mecca must be clarified as soon as possible.

Iranian Foreign Ministry stressed that the dimensions and circumstances of the deadly Hajj crush outside the holy city of Mecca must be clarified as soon as possible.

In a statement released on Saturday, the ministry called on the Saudi government to take "firm measures" to prevent such tragedies from happening in the future and urged the Saudis to show full transparency on causes of the crush.

Iran holds Saudi Arabia accountable for the disastrous event, the statement said, asking Saudi authorities to make full cooperation with officials of Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization to facilitate the identification of the Iranian victims.

The Iranian foreign ministry also called on Riyadh to speed up repatriation of the bodies of Iranian victims.

The statement further stressed that the victim's families must be compensated by Saudi Arabia for the loss of their loved ones.

Iran's Deputy FM

"Saudi Arabia should be answerable to the Islamic Republic [of Iran] and other countries that could not perform a calm Hajj [ritual]," Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Thursday.

According to Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization more than 1,300 people, including 125 Iranians, were killed in a crush during Hajj pilgrimage rituals outside Mecca earlier in the day. This as Saudi officials put the death toll at 717 and the number of injured at 863.

He also said that the fatal crush started after Saudi security forces blocked two streets while the pilgrims were walking towards the final ritual of the Hajj.

"We can by no means remain indifferent towards Saudi Arabia's irresponsible behavior," said Amir-Abdollahian, adding, "The tactlessness on the part of relevant Saudi authorities to provide security for the pilgrims cannot be overlooked."

Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani offers condolence to Hajj stampede victims

Expediency Council Chairman Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani offered condolences to the families of killed victims in Thursday fatal stampede during this year's annual Hajj pilgrimage.

In a statement, the senior Iranian politician urged the Saudi officials to feel responsible towards the sad incidence and to explain the real causes of it to the Islamic world and the bereaved pilgrims' relatives.

Ayatollah Rafsanjani encouraged all the relief organizations to take immediate action for helping the injured.

Senior Cleric Blames Saudi Regime's Mismanagement as Cause of Mina Incident

Tehran's provisional Friday prayers leader slammed the Saudi regime for the recent deadly incidents in this year's Hajj season, including a stampede in Mina, saying that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) should manage the Hajj pilgrimage.

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Addressing worshippers here in Tehran, Ayatollah Mohammad Emami Kashani expressed deep sorrow over the deaths of hundreds of Hajj

pilgrims, including more than 130 Iranian nationals, in the stampede in Mina, near Mecca, and said the tragic incident was indicative of the Saudi regime's "incompetence."

The cleric further emphasized that "a firm decision" should be taken by Muslim countries over the management of Hajj pilgrimage.

"The (responsibility to) manage the Hajj pilgrimage should be given to the OIC," he said, adding that all Islamic countries should have a say in the management of the religious event and even deploy security forces to Saudi Arabia.¹

Iran to Saudi FM: Don't test our patience

A senior Iranian official dismissed as baseless the comments by the Saudi foreign minister against the Islamic Republic, warning that there is a limit to Tehran's patience.

A senior Iranian official has dismissed as baseless the recent comments by the Saudi foreign minister against the Islamic Republic, warning that there is a limit to Tehran's patience.

"We warn Adel al-Jubeir not to test the patience of the Islamic Republic of Iran," Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Iran's deputy foreign minister for Arab and African affairs, said on Sunday.

He was reacting to the top Saudi diplomat's remarks on Saturday that Riyadh hoped Tehran would use additional earnings that it would make following the implementation of its July nuclear agreement with world powers, to develop its economy "rather than for aggressive policies."

"Instead of accusation and shifting the blame [on others], the Saudi foreign minister should assume his country's responsibility in the Mina disaster," the Iranian official said.

¹ Source : Tasnim

On September 24, two large masses of Muslim pilgrims fused together in Mina outside the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, leading to a stampede, which, according to Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization, killed around 4,700 people, including 461 Iranians.

Saudi Arabia, whose mismanagement prior to and in the aftermath of the incident has elicited widespread criticism, alleges that nearly 770 people were killed in the disaster. ¹

Iranian Parliament Speaker Condemns Saudis' Dishonesty

Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani slammed Saudi authorities for their dishonesty regarding the death toll from a recent crush of people in Mina, near Mecca, saying that they tried to hide the gravity of the disaster.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani slammed Saudi authorities for their dishonesty regarding the death toll from a recent crush of people in Mina, near Mecca, saying that they tried to hide the gravity of the disaster.

Speaking in an open session of the parliament on Monday, Larijani pointed to the recent deadly crush in Mina, which led to the deaths of over 7000 Hajj pilgrims, saying the Saudis were not honest about the death toll and until a few days ago, they claimed that only 750 people lost their lives in the tragedy.

He further emphasized that foreign pressures forced the Saudi government to announce that the crush left 750 killed.

"Why did you hide (the magnitude of the incident)?" he asked Saudi authorities, referring to the death toll earlier announced by the Iranian officials.

Such behavior and dishonesty indicate that the Saudi regime has been plagued by political turmoil, he said. ²

¹ Source : **PressTV**

² Source : **Tasnim**

Iranian Judiciary expects international community appropriate response to Hajj tragedy

The Iranian Judiciary says it expects the international community to appropriately react to the tragic crush of September 24 in Mina, near the city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

The Iranian Judiciary says it expects the international community to appropriately react to the tragic crush of September 24 in Mina, near the city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

“We expect the international bodies and those who claim to advocate human rights to have a good reaction to the occurrence of the Mina catastrophe,” Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejeie, the spokesman for Iran’s Judiciary, said on Sunday.

“This disaster, which happened on the day of Eid al-Adha (the Feast of the Sacrifice) was a big crime and a tragic event; and it is self-evident that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the bereaved families cannot get over the grief,” the spokesman said.

He said the Tehran’s Judiciary Department is currently investigating the issue and is taking measures so that the families of the victims – in case of having any complaints about the incident – can file them.

He went on to say that the perpetrators of the “appalling tragedy” must be brought to justice, adding that Tehran has launched a probe to identify those responsible for the incident and hopes that other Islamic countries take similar measures.

The crush reportedly took place after two large masses of pilgrims converged at a crossroads in Mina, a few kilometers east of the holy city of Mecca, during the symbolic ceremony of the stoning of Satan in Jamarat. ¹

¹ Source : **Agencies**

Iran's Attorney General

Country's attorney-general has told reporters all government authorities should address the rights of families of Mina incident victims.

Country's attorney-general has told reporters all government authorities should address the rights of families of Mina incident victims.

Hojjatolislam Ebrahim Raeisi who was speaking to the press after a session specially met to examine the legal aspects of the Mina incident on Wednesday, said that several meetings had collected the expert advice and comments of judges of country's Supreme Court and international law experts as well on the Mina incident; "today's session brought together engaged authorities, inter alia, presidential deputy for legal affairs, foreign ministry, Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization, and other responsible bodies; foreign ministry is definitely the pioneer of international addressing of the issue; however, Saudi government should know that the establishment of a truth-finding committee has our support yet, and we believe that it is a necessity," Raeisi told reporters.

"The footages recorded from Mina incident should be given to Iran and other countries whose Hajj pilgrims have been killed to rule out the possibility that even a tinge of evidence remains outside of the investigations; the truth-finding committee would be of great help on this issue; Saudis on the other hand should understand that the passing of the time will add to our resolve to address Mina incident, and that it would not be forgotten any time soon," he emphasized.

"During the first two or three days of the incident, I sent a letter to Saudi attorney-general demanding that they investigate all aspects of the issue, and file lawsuits against possible perpetrators, albeit with little hope that Saudi officials have the necessary will to do that," said the attorney-general, "we would sue Saudi government in international criminal courts should Saudis failed to effectively address the issue of paying recompenses for the families of the victims and turn a blind eye to demands that the perpetrators be tried," he added.

“The UN has a duty to bring the issue of security and safety of Hajj pilgrims to its Security Council agenda; we examined similar cases where the UN had in the past established truth-finding committee; we also examined possible roles to be played by ICC (International Criminal Court) and ICJ (International Court of Justice); the international community is accountable in Mina incident,” Raeisi told reporters, highlighting the role of foreign ministry as the pioneer body in addressing the issue.

“We expect to see that Saudi Arabia seriously addresses the issue and officially communicates the results of probable trial and hearing sessions; however, with few days since the incident, no indication would signal to us that Saudi Arabian officials actually have that seriousness we expected,” he lamented.¹

Saudi Mismanagement, Imprudence behind Mina Crush

Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan on Sunday referred to the imprudence and mismanagement of Saudi authorities as the main causes of a recent crush outside the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in which hundreds of Hajj pilgrims lost their lives.

Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan on Sunday referred to the imprudence and mismanagement of Saudi authorities as the main causes of a recent crush outside the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in which hundreds of Hajj pilgrims lost their lives.

The Saudi rulers’ mismanagement and imprudence are behind the tragic incident in Mina which brought pain to the hearts of the Islamic Ummah (community), Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan said in response to a condolence message by Lebanon’s Defense Minister Samir Moqbel following the deadly crush.

“This tragic disaster, along with Saudi rulers’ inhumane crimes against the oppressed and defenseless people of Yemen, reminds one of the Zionist regime’s cruel atrocities in Lebanon and Palestine,” he said.

¹ Source : **Mehr**

The Iranian defense minister further stressed that the Saudi crimes set the alarm bells ringing for the Islamic countries, adding that they need to put an end to the crimes vigilantly and tactfully.

He further called on Muslim countries to follow up on the tragedy and form a fact-finding commission to prevent the repetition of such tragedies in the future.¹

Iran's Shamkhani Urges Saudis' Accountability on Mina Crush

Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council has said that the Saudi government must be held accountable for investigating the status of the missing pilgrims and take necessary measures by accepting its responsibility.

On the sidelines of the funeral ceremony for the victims of Mina Tragedy on Sunday, Ali Shamkhani pointed to the continuous efforts of Iran's government for the identification and transfer of those who were killed in Mina incident and stated that, "the announced statistics belong to the victims whose bodies have been identified and there exist pilgrims with unidentified bodies who are considered as missing."

The official stressed Iran's unchanging sensitivity on issue of missing people in the accident and expressed hope that the Saudi government will take up necessary cooperative measures by taking responsibility of the missing pilgrims.

Shamkhani deemed Saudi Arabia's effort to find the exact cause of the disaster and punishment of those responsible for the tragedy as the first step and as a sign of respect on the part of Saudi government towards its legal and religious responsibilities and asserted that, "Saudi Arabia's

¹ Source : **Tasnim**

mismanagement and incompetence in dealing with the incident has reached to extremes that other hypotheses cannot be ruled out.”

Underlining that the tragic disaster has caused a huge moral damage to Islam, he concluded that, “terrorist activities carried out by Takfiri groups combined with tragic images of forced migration of the oppressed Syrian Muslims as well as incompetency in conducting Hajj rituals have offered an inappropriate and unrealistic image of Islam to the world.”¹

Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi writes letter to Muftis on Mina incident

Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi has written a letter to the grand muftis and scholars of the Muslim world in regard to the necessity of pursuing the Hajj tragedy which occurred in Mina.

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Considering that several weeks have passed since the dreadful disaster of Mina occurred without any serious reaction on the part of most of the Muslim scholars, Grand Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi has voiced his readiness to hold scientific and expert conferences to find a solution to this problem.

His Eminence said: “I hope that the Muftis of all Muslim countries as well as great Muslim scholars will join us to take effective actions in this regard so as to fulfill their responsibility before God the Almighty” in a letter to the grand muftis and scholars of the Muslim world in regard to the necessity of pursuing the Hajj tragedy which occurred in Mina.

The revered source of emulation quoted the Holy Quran: “...So give good news to My servants who listen to the word [of God] and follow the best

¹ Source : **Mehr**

[interpretation] of it. They are the ones whom God has guided, and it is they who possess intellect” [39:17-18].

He said that this disaster (apart from political issues and relationship between various countries) has created a responsibility for all Muslim scholars and religious authorities, wherever they are, hence, it is necessary to try to find a solution to prevent similar catastrophes from happening again in the future. However, weeks have passed since this tragic incident happened while there has been no serious and significant reaction on the part of Muslim scholars, and this is all while the Prophet Muhammad said: “A person who does not attend to the problems and the sufferings of Muslims is not a Muslim.”

In another part of the letter, His Eminence noted: “The life of a single Muslim is extremely valuable and thus must be protected. Anyone who saves the life of one person, has, in effect, saved the lives of all the people of the world, let alone the lives of thousands of Muslims who were engaged in a great act of worship such as the Hajj rituals. Considering the scope of the tragedy that happened, is not it wise to take necessary measures to solve this problem once and for all, and prevent such a great catastrophe and its adverse consequences from occurring again in the future?”

Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi noted that in today’s world where, sometimes, so many people voice their condemnation for the killing of one person with a huge coverage of the incident in the media, what will the people of the world say about us if Muslim scholars remain silent regarding an incident that left thousands of Muslims dead (based on the unanimous testimony of numerous eyewitnesses)? “Will they not judge us Muslims as a people who have no regard for the lives of their fellow Muslims?” he said.

Referring to the assertions of some of the Saudi scholars, the revered source of emulation stated: “Blaming this great disaster on ‘the divine will and providence’ to avoid assuming the responsibility for it is, in itself, another great catastrophe, which can undermine the true teachings of Islam regarding the issue of ‘divine will and providence.’”

Is it not true that, if a dangerous disease breaks out among Muslims, we must act to treat it? What sound mind would let a dangerous disease claim the lives of thousands and then associate it with “divine will and providence?!” (while this is not the way that “divine will and providence” have been depicted in the Quran and the Sunnah; that is to say, the true meaning of “divine will and providence” is that God has given us the responsibility, within the limits of our abilities and the actions that we can afford to take, to make decisions and act to solve problems, in which case if we evade our responsibilities we will be held accountable by God (His Eminence also promised to prepare a comprehensive treatise regarding the scope and the meaning of the issue of “divine will and providence” later on)).

After explaining the four responsibilities that we all have regarding this disaster, Ayatollah Makarem-Shirazi noted: “Based on my religious duties and my responsibility as a human being, I hereby announce that I am prepared to invite the prominent Muslim scholars from everywhere in the Muslim world, if they are willing to do so, to work with each other to solve this problem. In this regard, I propose to hold scientific and legal meetings and conferences (away from all political issues) in Qom or in the capitals of other Muslim countries, to investigate this incident and its adverse consequences.”

“I hope that the Muftis of all Muslim countries as well as great Muslim scholars will join us to take effective actions in this regard so as to fulfill their responsibility before God the Almighty,” he concluded.

Grand Ayatollah Wahid Khorasani: 'House of Saud, Traitors of the Two Holy Mosques'

Grand Ayatollah Khorasani stressed that the problem is that the so-called “Custodians of the Two Holy Mosques” in Makkah and Medina are in reality the “Traitors of the Two Holy Mosques.”

In a meeting with Sayyed Hasan Qazizadeh Hashemi, the Iranian Minister of Health, Grand Shiite cleric, Ayatollah Hussein Wahid Khorasani, pointed out that those who lost their lives while in the holy Ihram clothes

were on the path toward God and who died while in the Land of Revelation will be given a lofty position in the hereafter. Such a lofty status is incomprehensible and unexplainable to us.

“This is not just a promise, it is guaranteed by God Almighty and these words and interpretation in regard to the Guests of God [Hajj pilgrims] are clearly stated by Holy Quran,” His Eminence explained.

The renowned source of emulation stressed that the Hajj pilgrims have obtained a great blessing and the survivors are considered righteous and remainders.

Ayatollah Khorasani stressed that the problem is that the so-called “Custodians of the Two Holy Mosques” in Makkah and Medina are in reality the “Traitors of the Two Holy Mosques.”

He explained that when a country issues a visa, they agree to protect the applicants’ life and Saudi Arabia should not be negligent in this respect.

His Eminence also said that stating that burying the bodies of victims of the Mina incident in Makkah or Medina is something good and insisted that returning the victims’ bodies to Iran is not necessary.¹

Grand Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani urges Islamic unity

Grand Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani said that Islamic countries should collaborate in regards to hajj arrangements and they should increase relations with each other so that they can successfully review this issue.

Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani, while meeting with health minister, has pointed towards Mina incident and said that this tragedy was great for Muslims. Therefore, we must be prudent so that it would not happen in future.

¹ Source: Ahlul Bayt News Agency

He further said that Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries must make planning in this regard so that such type of tragic incidents do not happen in future.

He, while emphasizing upon the requirement of proper management of hajj affairs, said that hajj organizers must make efforts to organize the hajj rituals properly and they should focus on religious principles for this spiritual program.

Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani added that incident of Mina was highly tragic. Therefore, we must try to prevent such type of incidents by proper management.¹

Ayatollah Nouri Hamedani: Mina catastrophe defamed Al-Saud

Ayatollah Hossein Nouri Hamedani said on Wednesday that Mina catastrophe defamed Al Saud regime, Wahabism and those claiming to be the custodians of holy shrines in Mecca.

Al-Saud regime has not revealed the exact number of casualties to save its face and only tried to lower the figures but the pressure exerted by world nations forced it to admit the deaths of 4,000 Haj pilgrims.

Mina catastrophe brought sorrow and dismay among world Muslims and the worst of all is that the Saudi regime avoids delivering bodies of stamped victims, he said.

All should know the real nature of Al-Saud that claims to be the custodian of holy shrines, he said.

The incident proved the mismanagement and incapability of Saudi officials in handling Haj rituals, said Ayatollah Hamedani.²

¹ Source : **Shabestan**

² Source : **IRNA**

Ayatollah Sobhani: Mina incident cannot be forgotten

Ayatollah Jafar Sobhani at the start of his lecture of jurisprudence in Azam mosque while pointing towards the martyrdom of thousands of pilgrims said that this incident can never be forgotten because it a tragedy of whole Muslim Ummah. This has left all Muslims in a state of mourning.

Ayatollah Jafar Sobhani at the start of his lecture on jurisprudence in A'zam Mosque while making reference to the martyrdom of thousands of pilgrims said that this incident can never be forgotten because it the tragedy of the entire Muslim Ummah. This has left all Muslims in a state of shock and grief.

He further said that even if Aal-e Saud apologize for the next several years about this incident the tragedy will not be subside.

He said that Allah (SWT) will take revenge from Aal-e Saud.

He said that the house of Allah (SWT) which is the place of peace has been transformed into mass grave on the day of Eid-ul-Azha and Allah (SWT) will take revenge from the House of Saud and those responsible for the tragedy.¹

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli: Holy Ka'bah should be taken from grip of House of Saud

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli said that the “incompetent” House of Saudi should know that the Ka'bah is not the pyramids of Egypt and belongs to all Muslims who pray toward it throughout the day and should be taken from the grip of the House of Saud.

In a meeting with Sayyed Hasan Qazizadeh Hashemi, the Iranian Minister of Health, Grand Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi Amoli referred to the massacre of pilgrims during the Hajj pilgrimage in 1987 and said when the

¹ Source : **Shabestan**

word ‘Hajj’ is heard, one now thinks of the slaughter 402 innocent pilgrims in Saudi Arabia which has created an old wound in the hearts of Muslims.

The renowned Iranian source of emulation emphasized the incompetence of the House of Saud, adding that the 1987 Hajj tragedy is proof that the House of Saud is not competent to be the ‘Custodians of the Two Holy Mosques.’

‘If in this same year, the Holy Land was taken from the hands of the incompetent House of Saud we would not have witnessed this years’ tragedy in Mina,’ he said.

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli said that the House of Saudi should know that the Ka’bah is not the pyramids of Egypt and it belongs to all Muslims who pray toward it throughout the day.

He explained that Ka’bah, the *qiblah* of all Muslims, has been captured by the House of Saud and added that the pilgrims to this House of God died there while answering the call of God. The Saudi authorities claim that this tragedy was a mistake and that they intend to give the survivors blood-money in compensation. ‘This incident was semi-intentional and the Saudis must give them more compensation that that required from a mistake,’ he stated.

He stressed that it is necessary that Makkah’s Grand Mosque is liberated from the claws of the House of Saud and the organization of the Hajj ceremonies, in which Muslims of various nationalities, languages and cultures participate, should be managed by an international Islamic organization.

His Eminence referred to the recent Israeli attacks on Palestinians, saying the Israeli attacks have killed many civilians but Saudi Arabia’s Wahhabi clergy made no mention of this incident during Friday prayers’ sermons.

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli also condemned the Saudi-led war on their impoverished neighbouring country, Yemen, explaining: ‘The House of Saud is directly dominated by the United States and Israel. In broad

daylight, they attack innocent people and recently bombed a wedding celebration, where even children were not spared.”

The renowned Quranic exegete advised that all efforts must be applied to bring the bodies of those killed in the Mina tragedy back to Iran. “In case this is not possible, the family of the pilgrims should not be upset that their loved ones are buried in Makkah, because it is a holy land where the prophets walked,” he said.

He urged scholars in the seminaries and universities to come up with a plan to take the Two Holy Shrines out of the hands of incompetent House of Saud. “Muslims throughout the world must be united in this action and we hope that God Almighty will bestow a painful punishment on the House of Saud,” he said.

Seyed Ali Qazi Askar: Saudi Regime Unprepared, Negligent towards Hajj Pilgrims

Head of the Iranian pilgrims Seyed Ali Qazi Askar blasted the Saudi regime for its lack of preparedness and mismanagement in this year's Hajj rituals, specially for its failure in helping those injured in the Mina stampede.

"The Saudi officials were not even prepared to help the pilgrims after the tragic incident occurred," Qazi Askar told reporters late Saturday.

He noted that the Iranian delegation is looking for the lost pilgrims in hospitals of Jeddah and Mecca cities, and said, "The number of the lost Iranian pilgrims has declined to 325 from the previous 365."

Qazi Askar called for thorough investigation into the Mina incident by legal experts.

The statement of Ahlul-Bayt World Assembly over 'Tragedy in Mina'

The basic question by Muslims around the world is that why no decisive measures are taken for the prevention of such events? And why even worse and bitterer events with more casualties occur every year?



In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

“.. And whoever goes forth from his house towards Allah and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allah...”

The catastrophic disaster of Eid al-Adha in the holy land of Mina, which resulted in the death and injury of hundreds of guests of Allah, has caused deep sorrow and concern: sorrow for a large number of believers and pilgrims of Allah of various nationalities who lost their lives, and concern for the fate of administration of the Two Holy Mosques in Mecca and Medina.

Given that the Mina region has witnessed numerous tragedies for pilgrims, the basic question by Muslims around the world is that why no decisive measures are taken for the prevention of such events? And why even worse and bitterer events with more casualties occur every year? Why the

lives and the health of this huge number of pilgrims who go to Hajj are not considered so important?

In yesterday's incident, more than anything, negligence towards the security of the pilgrims is significant; and the question is: if the blocking of the paths was necessary, why pilgrims were not notified of alternative paths? Why no guideposts were arranged to guide the pilgrims who were too weary after one night of lodge in the land of Mash'ar? Why not enough security forces were present to control the large population? Why there were no quick medical or relief services for the victims?

If initial efforts were accomplished to help the wounded pilgrims, the death toll was surely lower. Why this year, when the number of pilgrims was less than other years, the hospitality was like this? And why the government of Saudi Arabia is bragging rather than adopting a sense of duty and responsibility?

In addition to Mina, there is another example of negligence towards the security of the pilgrims, which is the development project that is being continued in Mecca during the Hajj where the frightening shadows of cranes and unstable structures are being seen over millions of pilgrims and two weeks ago killed dozens of them.

It is much regrettable that the Court of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia officially confessed the negligence of the construction work on safety issues!

The Ahlul Bayt World Assembly appeals to Islamic scholars, muftis, heads of Islamic states, human rights organizations, international organizations, particularly the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which agreed to reduce the number of pilgrims, and the great Islamic Ummah to move collectively to shift the administration of pilgrimage and pilgrims from the monopoly of one single country to all Muslim countries in order to use the capacity and facilities of all Muslims to put an end to these tragic disasters.

The Ahlul Bayt World Assembly expresses its condolences on this sad tragedy to the Holy Spirit of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.), his Infallible Household (peace be upon them) and to the Leader of Islamic Revolution

Ayatollah Khamenei and all survivors and mourners across the Muslim world.

We further pray to Almighty Allah to bestow His mercy upon the victims and wish speedy recovery for all the injured pilgrims. O' Allah! We complain to you on the absence of our Holy Prophet, and on the nonappearance of our Imam, and on the high number of our enemies and low number of ourselves and severe conditions and attacks against us!

The Ahlul Bayt World Assembly

25 September 2015

The Statement of Al-Mustafa International University

Qom's al-Mustafa International University has issued a statement condemning Saudi Arabian authorities over their role in last Thursday's stampede in Mina, which killed over 2,000 pilgrims.



The following is an official statement from the representatives of the non-Iranian students and scholars of the Regional Consultants of al-Mustafa International University in condemnation of the recent incidents during the Hajj pilgrimage in Makkah and Mina by the ruling Saud dynasty which led to the deaths of hundreds of pilgrims to the Holy Ka'bah.

In the Name of God, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

“And [remember] when We made the House a place of reward for mankind and a sanctuary, [declaring], ‘Take the venue of prayer from Abraham’s Station.’ We charged Abraham and Ishmael [with its upkeep, saying], ‘Purify My House for those who go around it, [for] those who make it a retreat and [for] those who bow and prostrate.’” [Holy Quran 2:125]

May the peace and blessings of God Almighty and his angels be upon the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) who came as the harbinger of monotheism to save mankind from polytheism, superstition and ignorance.

Peace be upon the Infallible Imams of guidance who explained the majestic dimensions of this lofty place and conveyed the divine wisdom and commandments related to the pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque to their lovers.

Peace be upon all the Hajj pilgrims who responded to the call of the Lord to participate in this Abrahamic tradition just as the thirsty go to the source of water and like doves, the pilgrims sought refuge in the House of Monotheism to walk in the footsteps of the divine prophets and the angels and to circumambulate the divine throne.

“And it is the duty of mankind toward God to make pilgrimage to the House” [Holy Quran 3:97] and in the worlds of the Commander of the Faithful: *“God has made obligatory upon you the pilgrimage [Hajj] to His Sacred House which is the turning point for the people who go to it as beasts or pigeons go towards spring water... They stood in the position of His Prophets and resembled His angels who surround the Divine Throne securing all the benefits of performing His worship and hastening towards His promised forgiveness”* [Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 1].

This painful catastrophe and heart-wrenching tragedy in Makkah’s Sacred Mosque and in Mina which led to the deaths and injury of many of the Guests of God transformed the Eid celebrations throughout the Islamic ummah and the joy of many families throughout the Islamic world into grief this year. No committed Muslim with a conscience can forget the sorrow and heartbreaking scenes of the deaths of men and women who were still in the holy clothes of ihram. The people of every race and colour from every Islamic denomination, and especially the large numbers of follows of the school of the Ahl al-Bayt (A), who lost their lives with dry lips while oppressed and without refuge in a foreign land.

In addition to the bad record of incompetence and mismanagement in previous years among the Saudi rulers, who claim to be the servants of the

Two Holy Mosques, this year there have been increased divisions within the royal family and a struggle for power, the engagement of experienced and trained forces in the ongoing war, fratricide and crimes in Yemen, operations by Takfiri terrorists groups in many Islamic countries and the appointment of incompetent and uncommitted individuals to positions of power which have turned the majestic epic Hajj pilgrimage into a turbulent and horrific scene.

They cannot manage this Abrahamic assembly which should be the focus of Islamic unity, the embodiment of honour, integration and strengthening the foundations of faith and the power and glory of pure Muhammadan Islam against the oppressors and Zionism and which is the treatment centre of pain and wounds to the body of the Muslim ummah. Rather the House of Saud has prevented these practices and unfortunately, their incapability to providing physical security for the guests of God is becoming more and more obvious.

We represent the students and scholars of the Regional Consultants of al-Mustafa International University.

First: We offer our condolences in regard to this tragedy overwhelming to Imam al-Mahdi (AJ) and the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Community, Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei (HA), and to the grieving survivors in all Islamic nations. We ask God Almighty to grant the highest ranks to the victims and to grant the wounded a speedy recovery and also grant the families of the victims great patience and divine rewards.

Secondly: We call for the Islamic community, especially the academics, scholars and officials of Islamic countries, conferences, academic and legal institutions to all speak with one voice to defend the great station of Hajj from the intellectual and doctrinal attacks of the atheists and egoists and to realize efforts to manage the Abrahamic pilgrims who represent the dignity, unity and cooperation of all governments and the elites of the Islamic community.

Thirdly: We also advise the Saudi rulers and warn them that that they are on the brink of collapse due to their allegiance to the arrogant powers of

the world, the influence of Israel's open and hidden conspiracies, their reliance on the dollar, their rule by force and deception and their arrogant conflicts, their pride and reliance on reactionary ideas, Takfirism and terrorism.

It is in the interest of the pilgrim's lives in this world and in the hereafter that they adopt a path of cooperation with the guests of the House of God and to accept responsibility for this tragic incident, to apologize publicly and officially to the Islamic community (especially to the victims) to at least compensate their material and spiritual damages and to accept the moral consequences over the adverse consequences of this incident and not to expose themselves to more problems.

“And peace upon the righteous servants of God”

The Representatives of the Non-Iranian Seminarians and Scholars of the Regional Consultants of al-Mustafa International University,

September 28, 2015 [¹]

Islamic Centre of England issued statement on Hajj Tragedy

The tragedy of Mina which took the lives of hundreds of pilgrims has brought about much grief and sorrow in the heart of the Muslim Ummah...

In His Name, the Beneficent, the Merciful

...And whoever leaves his home migrating toward God and His Apostle, and is then overtaken by death, his reward shall certainly fall on God, and God is all-forgiving, all-merciful. (4:100)

We are from Allah and to Him we shall return

The tragedy of Mina which took the lives of hundreds of pilgrims has brought about much grief and sorrow in the heart of the Muslim Ummah and in this regard the Islamic Centre of England extends its heartfelt condolences to the Imam of our time, to the righteous Islamic leadership, and to all the Muslims around the world, particularly the families of those

¹ Source : **RASA**

lost in this tragedy. We ask Almighty Allah (swt) to elevate their status and give patience to their families.

The Islamic Centre of England calls upon the rulers of the Muslim countries to investigate the reasons behind this calamity and to form a multi-national operation of Muslim countries to secure the safety and security of the pilgrims in the Holy Lands in the future.

On this sad occasion, the Islamic Centre of England is holding a majlis fatiha ceremony for those pure souls who departed in this tragedy. The ceremony will share some thoughts from eye witnesses who have returned from Hajj in addition to a talk by His Eminence Shaykh Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali, the Director of the Islamic Centre of England. This ceremony is open to everyone who wishes to share in the grief and sorrow of the occasion with us.

May Allah bless the martyrs.

Wasalaamu Alaikum Warahmat Allah Wabarakatuh,

Islamic Centre of England

29th September 2015 [¹]

Al-Khalifa congratulated Saudis for organizing successful Hajj

Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi said all the more strange that the Bahraini Al Khalifa dynasty congratulated the Saudi's for organizing a successful Hajj. "Is this not ignorance and stupidity?"

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¹ Source : **IC-EL**

During his advanced jurisprudence class at Qom's Grand Mosque, Grand Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi stated that there is no doubt that the mismanagement of the Hajj pilgrimage by the Saudi authorities caused this tragedy and added that the accident was preventable but the authorities either did not want to or could not take the necessary steps to prevent it.

Ayatollah Makarem-Shirazi referred to the Saudi regime's mishandling of this incident, and explained that such an incident of this extent is rare and unique: "Unfortunately, instead of first sympathizing with the family of the bereaved, failing to determine a group to investigate the cause of the accident are punish the offenders and compensating the victims for their losses or adopting measures (even with the help of others) so that such incidents are not repeated in the future, they said 'this was due to divine fate and destiny which are inevitable!' This is pure mismanagement!"

He criticized the Saudi's excuse, saying: "Can we remove road controls and say the death toll from the accidents that will occur are caused by divine fate and destiny?"

The teacher in the Islamic Seminary of Qom explained that the House of Saud have not understood the meaning of divine fate and destiny, saying: "Even worse is that the Saudi Grand Mufti [Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah Al al-Shaykh] had stated that some pilgrims want to be killed in Mina and to reach a high station [in the hereafter] and put their selves in harm's way."

Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi said that if they had planned for such incidents and dealt properly [with the results] of this tragedy, it would not have been so severe.

"This incident was very unfortunate and surprising," he added.

He said all the more strange that the Bahraini Al Khalifa dynasty congratulated the Saudi's for organizing a successful Hajj. "Is this not ignorance and stupidity? We want them to come to their senses and to reform their approach," he said.¹

¹ Source : **Rasa**

The Iranian scholar emphasized that the Hajj pilgrimage belongs to the entire Islamic community and said one of the adverse effects of this issue is the attack on the sanctity of the Hajj which unfortunately, brought about great damages, adding: "These losses cannot be simply and easily compensated for."

In conclusion, Ayatollah Makarem-Shirazi expressed hope that God will compensate [the victims] in different ways for this great loss to the Islamic world.

House of Saud source of corruption, sedition in Muslim world

Ayatollah Nouri-Hamadani stated that the House of Saud is the source of most of the corruption and sedition in the Islamic world and stressed that the Saudi attack on Yemen, which has killed innocent people there and revealed the true nature of the evil Saudi rulers.

Speaking at his first jurisprudence class of the new academic term, Ayatollah Hussein Nouri-Hamadani stated the duty of religious scholars is to deal with deviations and innovations in religion and added that most Muslim countries only carry the name of Islam.

"They build mosques, but there is no guidance in them," he said.

His Eminence criticized Saudi rulers' allegiance and loyalty to the arrogant superpowers and to Israel, and said that as a result of their misinterpretations and deviant thinking, Saudi rulers are the source of corruption and sedition in the Muslim world and rule with tyranny.

The renowned source of emulation also referred to the 1987 incident in Makkah where pilgrims to the House of God were massacred by Saudi Arabian security forces during the Hajj period and honoured the martyrs of this incident.

Referring to Imam Ruhollah Khomeini's historical message on this occasion, Ayatollah Nouri-Hamadani noted several points and stressed on the importance of the Hajj pilgrimage, saying that the Hajj is a divine duty which has political, social and cultural dimensions.

He added that the late Imam emphasized that the political dimension of Hajj is the most neglected of all dimensions.

His Eminence explained that Hajj is a symbol of unity and solidarity of the Islamic ummah and said that Muslims should unite to solve the problems they face and thwart the enemies' plots.

Ayatollah Nouri-Hamadani added that the House of Saud have attacked Yemen and have killed innocent men, women and children over the past five months.

He added that this brutal bombardment shows their true and evil nature and has proved that they have deviated far from Islamic religious teachings.

He added that all Muslims should stand with the people of Yemen as our religion orders us to help any oppressed people against the enemies.

"We condemn the attack on Yemen and stand with the oppressed people of this country," he said.

Ayatollah Noori Hamedani further explained that the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei, had stressed that there was no difference between the last summers' Israel attack on the Gaza Strip and Saudi Arabia's current bombardment of Yemen.

"Just as we supported the people of Gaza, we support the Yemeni people," he added.

He also condemned the recent Israeli aggression on Jerusalem's al-Aqsa Mosque, saying: "We condemn this incident and are surprised at the silence of the Muslim world and Islamic scholars."

Ayatollah Nouri-Hamadani said we are surprised that some Muslim scholars and rulers of Muslim countries are silent in the face of this brutal crime. "al-Aqsa Mosque belongs to all Muslims and we should be united and harmonious in order to save it from the clutches of the Zionists," he said.¹

Iranian Foreign Ministry to Pursue Compensation for Victims of Mina Incident: Official

The Iranian Foreign Ministry is tasked with pursuing compensation for the Iranian nationals killed or injured in September deadly crush in Mina, Saudi Arabia, Head of Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization Saeed Ohadi announced.

Ohadi pointed to the efforts that are underway to follow up on the issue of receiving compensations from Saudi Arabia, saying that a meeting was held last week among deputy foreign ministers, officials at Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization and Hojjatoleslam Seyed Ali Qazi Askar, the representative of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution in hajj and pilgrimage affairs.

"At the meeting, held at the office of Hojjatoleslam Qazi Askar, ways to gain compensations for the victims of Mina tragedy were discussed," he said.

¹ Source : **Rasa**

Ohadi further emphasized that the responsibility to pursue the issue has been given to the Consular Department of the Foreign Ministry and Iran's consulate general in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Saudi authorities have come under fire for their inability to ensure the safety of hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who converge on Mecca every year.¹

Body of ex-Iran ambassador identified in Saudi Arabia

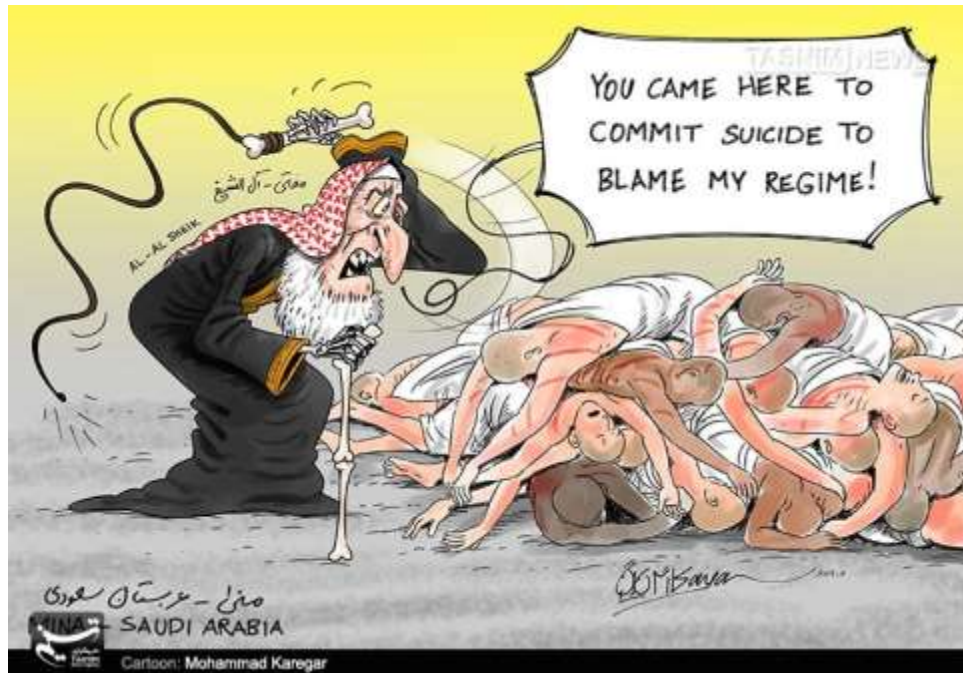
The body of Iran's former ambassador to Lebanon, Ghazanfar Roknabadi, who went missing during the September 24 Mina tragedy in Saudi Arabia was identified and later transferred to Iran.

The body of the Iranian diplomat was identified following DNA tests as two of his close relatives went to Saudi Arabia to help in the identification process. Evidence showed he lost his life in the Mina tragedy.

Late Ronkabadi's body was buried in Iran. Government officials and thousands of people attended his funeral ceremony.

¹ Source : **Tasnim**

Cartoon image



Cartoonist react to Al-Saud Wahabi mufti who blames the innocent pilgrims who were martyred because of the incompetence of Saudi Hajj Officials.