

A Short History of Hajj Disasters

On Wednesday we learned about a Hajj stampede where 717 Muslims were trampled to death by their fellow co-religionists. Another 850 were maimed. The week before a crane collapsed on the Grand Mosque killing 111 and wounding over 394.

It is obligatory for every Muslim to make the pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca at least once in a life time. In fact the Hajj is one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

These are not isolated incidents. These man caused disasters occur with alarming frequency in the Islamic holy city of Mecca.

Let's start with the year 1975. An exploding propane tank caused the tent city for pilgrims to catch fire. Before the fire was extinguished 200 Muslims perished in the flames and scores were horribly burned.

Then in 1987 Iranian demonstrators clashed with Saudi police killing over 400 pilgrims. Thousands more were wounded in the clash.

Just two year later Kuwaiti Shias exploded two bombs killing and wounding 17 people. Saudi Arabia later executed 16 conspirators.

In 1990 a stampede inside a pedestrian tunnel leading to Mecca killed a 1,426 Muslims There were so many maimed people the Saudis never released a figure on those who were "just wounded". A safe guess would be 2,000 to 4,000.

Another stampede occurred in 1994 killing 270 Muslims.

Then in 1998 another 118 Muslims were crushed to death in yet another stampede incident on a bridge leading into Mecca. The injured numbered 180.

March of 2001 35 Muslims lost their lives in the annual Stoning of the Devil event. The Stoning of Devil involves a million or more fanatic Muslims circling a column and throwing fist sized rocks. What could possibly go wrong with this crazed ritual?

Two years later (2003) at the same Stoning the Devil ritual a mere 14 people were killed. The lowest death toll in any Hajj event since 1975.

Another mass slaughter occurred in 2004 during the same Stoning the Devil ritual. This time the death toll was much higher. The killed numbered 251 and the wounded numbered 244.

Just two years later (2006) another stampede happened at the same event. This time 346 Muslims perished. Another 289 people were maimed.

Also, in 2006 a nearby hotel, the Al-Ghaza Hotel, collapsed under the sheer weight of Muslim pilgrims. The death toll was 76 and the number of injured was 64.

Contrast this mass slaughter with Christian events. The recent papal visit to the United States attracted millions to see the Pope. Was anyone trampled or crushed by their fellow Roman Catholics? The last papal visit to Mexico saw three million Catholics in the streets of Mexico City. Was there any kind of human stampede ?

Billy Graham preached to 215 million people in over 185 countries during his career. He pioneered the mass crusade

preaching to hundreds of thousands in outdoor arenas and stadiums. Did you ever hear of the first person being killed in a stampede at a Billy Graham preaching event?

There is something in the Muslim collective psyche that causes these barbaric stampedes. Perhaps it is due to Islam not having a Golden Rule. Maybe it is caused by the devaluing of human life as taught in the Koran. Maybe these disasters are caused the frantic nature of Muslim fanaticism that is all too prevalent in our age. Maybe all of this can be traced back to Mohammed's calloused and evil treatment of the men and women who were his contemporaries.

All of these points are worth pondering.