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Tragedy strikes Hajj at Mina

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14 January, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Tragedy strikes Hajj at Mina

Saudi authorities are asking questions about how 363 Muslims were trampled to death at the Hajj religious pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia on Thursday. The tragedy happened even though the police had put many more specially trained officers on duty to prevent this kind of disaster. The pilgrims lost their lives in a stampede at the entrance to a bridge in Mina, near Mecca. Hundreds of thousands of worshippers cross the bridge to pelt stones at huge rocks symbolizing the devil. The act is part of a ritual for people to cleanse themselves of sin. The tragedy may have started by people falling over luggage that fell from a bus.

Authorities are now searching for answers as to how such tragedy can be avoided in the future. Event organizers are blaming pilgrims for disobeying orders given by security guards to not carry large items of luggage. Saudi's Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz said the police did everything they could and "averted many more disasters from happening". The Hajj is a pilgrimage, which all able-bodied Muslims should go on at least once in their lifetime if they can afford it. About two million believers from around 180 countries make the trip to Mecca each year.

WARM-UPS

1. MECCA SEARCH: Talk to as many other students as you can to find out what they know about Mecca. After you have talked to lots of students, sit down with your partner(s) and share your information. Tell each other what you thought was interesting or surprising. Would you like to visit Mecca or go on the Hajj pilgrimage?

2. RELIGIOUS PRACTICE: Are you religious? Do you do things every day to show your faith? In pairs / groups, talk about the importance of the following:

- Pilgrimages to holy sites
- Prayer
- Reading a holy book
- Confessing your sins
- Fasting
- Giving money to charity
- Helping your fellow human beings
- Going to a mosque, temple, church...

3. PILGRIMAGES: Have you ever been, or would you like to go, on a pilgrimage? Which of the pilgrimages below are you most and least interested in?

- a. A religious pilgrimage.
- b. A pilgrimage to trace your family history.
- c. A pilgrimage to understand your country's history.
- d. A pilgrimage to all of the places visited by your favorite actor/singer.
- e. A pilgrimage to find out more about yourself.
- f. A pilgrimage to search for the best of something.

4. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Questions / Muslims / pilgrimages / the Hajj / tragedies / holy events / stampedes / Mecca / the devil / rituals / sin / answers / security guards / faith / duty

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

5. HOLY PLACES: With your partner(s), brainstorm a list of the world's holiest sites. Talk about their importance and what you know about them. Would like to visit them? Here are a few you can talk about to get you started:

- Mecca
- Uluru (Ayers Rock)
- The Vatican
- Bethlehem
- The River Ganges
- Jokang temple - Tibet
- Axum (Ethiopia)
- Maccu Picchu (Peru)

6. MECCA: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Mecca. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Hundreds of people died at a holy site near Mecca. | T / F |
| b. It is the first time such a tragedy has affected the Hajj pilgrimage. | T / F |
| c. Pilgrims throw stones at a rock to cleanse their sins. | T / F |
| d. The collapse of a bridge led to a sudden and tragic stampede. | T / F |
| e. Authorities are now searching for answers. | T / F |
| f. A Saudi prince said the police were not to blame for the tragedy. | T / F |
| g. All able-bodied Muslims with enough money should attend the Hajj. | T / F |
| h. Around twenty million people attend the Hajj pilgrimage each year. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| a. trampled | stop |
| b. pilgrimage | accusing |
| c. prevent | rid |
| d. pelt | fit |
| e. cleanse | crushed |
| f. searching | stopped |
| g. blaming | throw |
| h. averted | followers |
| i. able-bodied | religious journey |
| j. believers | looking |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. the Hajj religious | specialized officers on duty |
| b. police had put many more | did everything they could |
| c. The pilgrims lost their lives | symbolizing the devil |
| d. pelt stones at huge rocks | such tragedy can be avoided |
| e. a ritual for people to cleanse | disasters from happening |
| f. searching for answers as to how | in a stampede |
| g. Event organizers are blaming | from around 180 countries |
| h. the police | pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia |
| i. averted many more | themselves of sin |
| j. two million believers | pilgrims for disobeying orders |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Tragedy strikes Hajj at Mina

Saudi authorities are asking questions about how 363 Muslims were _____ to death at the Hajj religious pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia on Thursday. The _____ happened even though the police had put many more specially trained officers on duty to _____ this kind of disaster. The pilgrims _____ their lives in a stampede at the entrance to a bridge in Mina, near Mecca. Hundreds of thousands of _____ cross the bridge to _____ stones at huge rocks symbolizing the devil. The act is part of a _____ for people to cleanse themselves of sin. The tragedy may have started by people falling over _____ that fell from a bus.

Authorities are now _____ for answers as to how such tragedy can be _____ in the future. Event organizers are blaming pilgrims for disobeying _____ given by security guards to not carry large _____ of luggage. Saudi's Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz said the police did everything they could and "_____ many more disasters from happening". The Hajj is a pilgrimage, which all _____ - bodied Muslims should go on at least once in their _____ if they can afford it. About two million believers from around 180 countries _____ the trip to Mecca each year.

pelt
prevent
trampled
luggage
ritual
tragedy
worshippers
lost
lifetime
avoided
make
items
searching
able
orders
averted

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Tragedy strikes Hajj at Mina

Saudi _____ are asking questions about how 363 Muslims were _____ to death at the Hajj religious pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia on Thursday. The tragedy happened even though the police had put many more specially trained officers on duty to _____ this kind of disaster. The pilgrims lost their lives in a stampede at the entrance to a bridge in Mina, near Mecca. Hundreds of thousands of _____ cross the bridge to pelt stones at huge rocks symbolizing the devil. The act is part of a _____ for people to cleanse themselves of _____. The tragedy may have started by people falling over luggage that fell from a bus.

Authorities are now searching for answers as to how such _____ can be avoided in the future. Event organizers are blaming pilgrims for _____ orders given by security guards to not carry large _____ of luggage. Saudi's Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz said the police did everything they could and "averted many more _____ from happening". The Hajj is a pilgrimage, which all able-bodied Muslims should go on at least once in their _____ if they can afford it. About two million _____ from around 180 countries make the trip to Mecca each year.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'make' and 'trip'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "PILGRIMS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about pilgrimages.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- questions
- trained
- entrance
- symbolizing
- cleanse
- luggage
- future
- organizers
- items
- averted
- able
- trip

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What did you think when you first read the headline?
- c. What do you know about the Hajj?
- d. What do you think it is like to be among hundreds of thousands of people?
- e. Would you like to go on a pilgrimage?
- f. What problems do you think organizers have to ensure the safety of two million pilgrims?
- g. Would you agree that the Hajj is the world's greatest religious event?
- h. What once-in-a-lifetime trip would you like to make?
- i. How do you think Saudi authorities should deal with such large numbers of people next year?
- j. What is the biggest crowd of people you've ever been in?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think tragedies similar to this can ever be prevented?
- d. What do you do to demonstrate your faith?
- e. Do you believe there is a devil?
- f. Are there any religious rituals you regularly do?
- g. Do you think anyone can be blamed for such a tragedy?
- h. Would you like to witness or experience the Hajj?
- i. Do you do anything to cleanse yourself of sin?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the Hajj and Mecca. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. MY PILGRIMAGE: Write an essay describing a pilgrimage you would like to make – religious or nonreligious. Read your essay to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all describe similar pilgrimages?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to the head of security for the Hajj. Tell him/her your ideas for making the event safer next year. Show your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone have similar ideas?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. T d. F e. T f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. trampled	crushed
b. pilgrimage	religious journey
c. prevent	stop
d. pelt	throw
e. cleanse	rid
f. searching	looking
g. blaming	accusing
h. averted	stopped
i. able-bodied	fit
j. believers	followers

PHRASE MATCH:

a. the Hajj religious	pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia
b. police had put many more	specially trained officers on duty
c. The pilgrims lost their lives	in a stampede
d. pelt stones at huge rocks	symbolizing the devil
e. a ritual for people to cleanse	themselves of sin
f. searching for answers as to how	such tragedy can be avoided
g. Event organizers are blaming	pilgrims for disobeying orders
h. the police	did everything they could
i. averted many more	disasters from happening
j. two million believers	from around 180 countries

GAP FILL:

Tragedy strikes Hajj at Mina

Saudi authorities are asking questions about how 363 Muslims were **trampled** to death at the Hajj religious pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia on Thursday. The **tragedy** happened even though the police had put many more specially trained officers on duty to **prevent** this kind of disaster. The pilgrims **lost** their lives in a stampede at the entrance to a bridge in Mina, near Mecca. Hundreds of thousands of **worshippers** cross the bridge to **pelt** stones at huge rocks symbolizing the devil. The act is part of a **ritual** for people to cleanse themselves of sin. The tragedy may have started by people falling over **luggage** that fell from a bus.

Authorities are now **searching** for answers as to how such tragedy can be **avoided** in the future. Event organizers are blaming pilgrims for disobeying **orders** given by security guards to not carry large **items** of luggage. Saudi's Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdul-Aziz said the police did everything they could and "**averted** many more disasters from happening". The Hajj is a pilgrimage, which all **able**-bodied Muslims should go on at least once in their **lifetime** if they can afford it. About two million believers from around 180 countries **make** the trip to Mecca each year.