



Correspondence

The dialogue among Islamic countries and groups for a healthy and safe Hajj



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Saudi Arabia
Mass casualty incidents

Dear Editor

We appreciate Alaska's ideas regarding the importance of crowd safety and warnings on the possibility of re-occurrence of such terrible incidents in future Hajjs [1]. Hereby, we would like to add some points to their apposite suggestions.

First, as Alaska states, interventions should start well in advance of the event. To this end, the main countries sending a large number of pilgrims could establish a department especially devoted to dealing with mass gatherings [2]. Among the duties of such a department would be the evaluation of intended pilgrims in terms of physical ability, thus excluding the weak for whom the performance of the Hajj rituals may prove taxing. Another main duty of this department would be to educate able-bodied pilgrims to prepare them for dealing with health issues effectively.

Moreover, the fact that recurrent stampedes which have occurred every few years [3] points towards the necessity of minor modifications in the religious rituals. Last year's Mina stampede was a terrible event that should have never taken place. Although the kingdom of Saudi Arabia officially announced the death toll at 769, some researchers estimate it as more than 2000 [4]. In Islamic jurisprudence, the principle of self-preservation is a main concern; when the performance of a religious rite is likely to cause life-threatening risks, the rite can be modified [5]. The Hajj rituals contain a large number of complex rules, and in critical situations like those of the recent years, jurists could put forward religious edicts allowing the modification of such rules in order to save pilgrims' lives.

In conclusion, confirming Alaska et al.'s idea regarding international collaboration, we believe that Saudi Arabia authorities would convene an Islamic supreme council consisting of representatives from all Islamic countries and groups in order to discuss and implement such interventions collectively.

Authors' contributions

1. Prof. Payman Salamati designed the idea, drafted the paper and approved the version to be published.
2. Dr. Zohrehsadat Naji designed the idea, revised the paper

critically and approved the version to be published.

Dr. Sofia A. Koutlaki designed the idea, revised the paper critically and approved the version to be published.

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