



Attacks on the Hajj

The annual Hajj pilgrimage has had its fair share of incidents and deaths in one way or another over its 14 century history.

The year 2015 was no different. 114 people were killed when a crane came crashing down in a storm. Another 2,400 meet their end in a human crush.

Ultimately it is an honour for a pilgrim to meet his end on this noble journey. A person will be resurrected in the condition in which he died.

Here are some notable man-made attacks on the Hajj pilgrims. History bears testimony that whoever attacks the Hajj is an enemy of the highest degree:

1. 1757 HAJJ CARAVAN RAID

The 1757 Hajj caravan raid was the plunder and massacre of the Hajj caravan on its return to Damascus from Makkah Mukarramah by Bedouin tribesmen led by Qa'dan al-Fa'iz of the Bani Saqr tribe. An estimated 20,000 pilgrims were either killed or died of hunger or thirst as a result of the raid.

The 18th century Damascus-based chronicler Ahmed al-Budeiri recorded that pilgrims, men and women, were stripped of their clothing and left naked in the desert by the Bedouin raiders. What is notable is that the Bani Saqr tribe had shown its true colours as enemies of the Muslim world.

In 1917 Fawaz el Fayez, one of the leaders of the Bani Saqr, had a secret meeting with T.E. Lawrence to conspire in bringing down the Muslim Khilafah. By 1918 the Bani Saqr were united in their opposition to the Khilafah and were offering to provide the rebel forces with eleven thousand men costing £30,000 a month.

In 1933 Sheikh Mithqal Pasha al-Fayez, Chief of the Fayez clan of Beni Saqr, was a member of a delegation which met the President of the Zionist Organisation, Chaim Weizmann, and the head of the Zionist political department in Palestine, Chaim Arlosoroff, at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem.

2. 1502 VASCO DA GAMA

Western history books have made out the 15th century Portuguese explorer Vasco Da Gama as a hero. But a study of his life shows him to be a cruel Islamophobe who carried out acts of merciless brutality:

On reaching India in October 1502, Gama's fleet set about capturing any Arab vessel he came across in Indian waters, most notoriously the Miri, a pilgrim ship from Makkah, whose passengers he had massacred in open water. During his second voyage to Calicut, da Gama intercepted a ship of Muslim pilgrims at Madayi travelling from Calicut to Makkah.

Described in detail by eyewitness Thomé Lopes and chronicler Gaspar Correia as one that is unequalled in cold-blooded cruelty, da Gama looted the ship with over 400 pilgrims on board including 50 women and kids, locked in the passengers and an ambassador from Egypt and burnt them to death. They offered their wealth but were not spared. Da Gama looked on through the porthole and saw the women bringing up their gold and jewels and holding up their babies to beg for mercy. It took four days for the ship to sink, killing all men, women, and children.

When da Gama arrived in Calicut in 1502, he hung 38 fishermen; cut off their heads, feet, and hands; and floated the dismembered corpses onto the shore. In Muslim Mombasa in 1497 Da Gama forced some Muslims on board and tortured them with boiling oil. In 1498 he indiscriminately fired at civilians on Muslim Mozambique Island.

3. 930 SHIA RAIDS

In 906 the Shia Qarmatians ambushed a caravan of pilgrims heading for Makkah Mukarramah and killed 20,000 people. In 930, they sacked Makkah, massacred its population, and stole the Black Stone (it was returned 22 years later after a ransom was paid).

Abu Tahir Sulayman al-Jannabi led the Qarmatians' most notorious attack in 930 when he pillaged Makkah Mukarramah. The Qarmatian army set about massacring the pilgrims, taunting them with verses of the Quran as they did so. The bodies of the pilgrims were left to rot in the streets or thrown down the Well of Zamzam.

On the first day of the Hajj they led a charge on pilgrims, riding their horses into Masjid al-Haram and killing pilgrims praying around the Ka'bah. They killed some thirty thousand.

The Shia have subsequently used the Hajj to cause mayhem:

July 31, 1987: A clash between Shia Iranian demonstrators and Saudi security forces brought death to more than 400 pilgrims and injury to thousands more.

July 9, 1989: Two bombs exploded, killing one pilgrim and wounding another 16. Kuwaiti Shias were found responsible.

4. 1186 CRUSADERS

Raynald of Châtillon was a French noble who joined the Crusades. He built a fleet of five ships which plundered the coast of the Red Sea, threatening the route of the Muslim pilgrims towards Makkah Mukarramah in 1183.

Part of his fleet made a plundering raid along the coasts, threatening the security of the holy cities of Makkah Mukarramah and Madinah Munawwarah.

In 1186 Raynald attacked a large Hajj caravan travelling between Cairo and Damascus, breaking the 4 year truce between Salahuddeen and the Crusaders. He took all the merchants and their families prisoner as well as a large amount of booty and refused to receive envoys from Salahuddeen.

This led directly to the end of the truce. Salahuddeen sent troops to protect a later pilgrim caravan in 1187. Salahuddeen swore that Raynald would be executed if he was ever taken

prisoner. And it happened thus when Salahuddeen personally executed him after offering him a chance to accept Islam after the Battle of Hattin.

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