

Ride operator arrested after machine malfunctions, tampering is suspected

BY TY GOOCH
STAFF WRITER

On the night of Oct. 24, as riders at the North Carolina State Fair exited the Vortex, the spinning ride unexpectedly jolted into motion, throwing riders onto its metal deck.

Five victims were rushed to the hospital, two of whom were in critical condition.

Fox News reports that, as of Oct. 25, two of the victims had been released, while three others remained hospitalized.

The incident is said to have been the result of tampering.

After an investigation by the Wake County sheriff's office, Vortex ride operator Timothy Dwayne Tutterrow has been charged with assault with a deadly weapon.

According to the sheriff's office, Tutterrow disabled safety devices in order to keep the Vortex in operation, as shutting it down would result in a loss of revenue.

"Through our investigation, talking to witnesses and to the ride operator, we have determined that this ride was tampered with ... and that critical safety devices were tampered with and compromised," said Wake County Sheriff Donnie Harrison at a press conference on Oct. 26.

While Tutterrow has been charged, the sheriff's office is continuing its investigation.

"It's an ongoing investigation, and there is still a lot of information to be gathered,"

North Carolina Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler told NBC News.

Tutterrow's family commented on the incident, saying that Tutterrow meant no harm in his actions.

"Tim's not a bad guy," said Stuart Mouser, the nephew of Tutterrow's ex-wife, to The (Raleigh) News & Observer.

But Tutterrow doesn't have to be considered a bad guy to be convicted. Regardless of his intentions, he may still be convicted for assault with a deadly weapon if a court proves that he acted negligently on the job.

The state fair incident has not dissuaded some Guilford College students from attending the fair in the future, however.

"This doesn't necessarily make me want to not go to the fair," said junior Daniel McFadden. "Those injured were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. I'd still go."

Sophomore John Brvenik would also go.

"Just because you have one bad ride operator, doesn't mean that they are all bad," said Brvenik.

On the other hand, first-year Nora Prokosch is having second thoughts.

"Knowing that someone who was hired to operate a ride purposely disabled the safety devices kind of makes me not want to go," said Prokosch.

The fair, which closed on Oct. 26, will reopen next October.



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Syrian War: no end in sight, no one's keeping watch

BY VALERIA SOSA
STAFF WRITER

"Ever since the die-down of the fervor around the use of the chemical weapons ... I haven't followed, and I think most Americans haven't followed, what's been going on as closely," said Jeremy Rinker, visiting assistant professor of peace and conflict studies. "If it's not on the front page of a paper, it's easy to forget about the fact that there is a lot of suffering and ongoing violence in Syria."

With the issue of chemical weapons mostly resolved, the simmering hype over the Syrian revolution has subsided.

Or, as Rinker indicates, it's at least no longer on the front page of every major newspaper.

However, many believe that the regime's violence and brutal oppression is as intense as ever.

Mohammad al-Bardan, an activist who is part of the Syrian Nonviolence Movement, participated in the first months of the protests in Syria.

Al-Bardan barely escaped detainment and torture.

"Many who were less involved than me were captured and tortured," al-Bardan, who left Syria to study in the U.S., told The Guilfordian in a phone interview.

"In the Southern prisons, one of the (officers) liked to put 90 people in a small square in a small room that could only fit 10 people," said al-Bardan. "There were lots of death inside, and no one removed those bodies."

"It's just very, very horrible and hard to describe or even to imagine."

The violence is not limited to activists or to adults.

"This regime has really targeted children in a way that hasn't been seen," Mohja Kahf, associate professor of comparative literature and Middle Eastern studies at University of Arkansas, told The Guilfordian in a phone interview. "Children and teens are tortured by way of cigarette burns, mutilations, imprisonment and rape before death."

Kahf is also part of the Syrian Nonviolence Movement.

She recounts the story of Hamzah Khatib, age 13, who was involved in the protests before his arrest in April 2011. On May 24, Khatib's body was returned to his parents with cigarette burns, three non-lethal bullet holes, severed genitals and burns on his hands and feet, among other injuries.

According to the Human Rights Watch, children as young as Khatib are held in detention facilities and kept in solitary confinement where they are severely beaten, electrocuted

and often left to dangle from metal handcuffs for hours at a time.

All of the children interviewed reported that they did not receive adequate food and water during their confinement. The majority received no medical treatment for torture-inflicted injuries.

"This regime has tortured children for a very long time in the prisons," said Kahf. "There have been children born in prisons, born from rape. They have never seen a sky or known what a bird is. Literally."

"There is a sense in the regime that ... if we teach the children a lesson, the parents will learn it even better."

While the human rights violations rampant in Syria have served to deter protest groups, there is still hope for the people.

"Ordinary people have power if they just organize and use it, even against lethal, brutal repression," Kahf said.

And while both Kahf and al-Bardan do not expect the war to end anytime soon, they continue fighting for a better Syria.

"We are trying to focus more on teaching the next generation the aspects for change," said al-Bardan. "To have a generation that could solve the problem."