

Muslims continue rituals after 251 pilgrims killed

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MINA, Saudi Arabia — Seven more pilgrims died after being crushed in a stampede during the ritual stoning of Satan at the Muslim hajj, bringing the death toll to 251, a Saudi official said. "Seven of the wounded succumbed to their injuries," said Khaled al-Marghalani, spokesman for The Health Ministry. He provided no details on ages, gender or nationality.

Bishr Abdullah, one of hundreds injured in Sunday's stampede, recounted the horror that he experienced. When the pushing began from two directions, Abdullah — jammed in the midst of a crowd of pilgrims close to a tall stone pillar — had no place to turn. The Nigerian pilgrim slipped and fell beneath many sandaled feet. "When the pressure intensified, I

could not breathe and I fell. People stepped on me, but luckily someone I don't know pulled me out," he said Monday from his bed at King Faisal Hospital in Mecca, where he was recovering with a dislocated shoulder.

Abdullah was one of nearly 250 pilgrims injured in Sunday's stampede during the often perilous "stoning of the devil" ritual that killed 244 worshippers this year.

Pilgrims also have been trampled to death on their way to the stoning ritual in 1994, 1998, 2001 and last year. Despite the Sunday tragedy, waves of pilgrims pushed and shoved their way through the crowds to continue with the devil-stoning rituals Monday.

Ambulances were seen whisking away a few pilgrims overcome by the crush, but no further deaths or major incidents were report-

ed. Their conditions weren't unknown, but pilgrims sometimes faint from exhaustion or suffer from the stress of trying to stay on their feet in the crowd.

Most of those killed in Sunday's tragedy on the plains of Mina outside Islam's holy city of Mecca were Asians, with the biggest number of the dead identified so far as coming from Indonesia and Pakistan, the official Saudi Press Agency reported. It was the worst tragedy in seven years at the annual Muslim pilgrimage, which often has been marred by deadly fires, stampedes and riots.

Fifty-four Indonesians and 36 Pakistanis were among the dead, plus about a dozen citizens each from Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, India and Bangladesh, SPA reported. It said other pilgrims to die in the stampede were from China, Yemen, Sri Lanka,

Afghanistan and several African countries.

Two of the dead were Saudis, and 53 bodies have not been identified, SPA said, adding that 133 victims were male and 111 were female, including a child. The genders of the seven victims who died Monday were not known.

After the tragedy, Saudi King Fahd issued an order to form an agency to develop Mecca and Medina, Islam's two holiest cities, "according to the current and future circumstances," the official Saudi Press Agency reported Monday. The order, issued late Sunday, did not directly mention the tragedy. It said without further elaboration that plans should be "comprehensive" and have a span of "no less than 20 years."

The crowd got out of control Sunday as people moved along a wide ramp leading to

the "stoning of the devil" ritual — where pilgrims throw pebbles at three stone pillars, symbolizing their contempt for the devil. Saudi authorities said that with pressure from behind, a few pilgrims fell down and panic set off a stampede. "All precautions were taken to prevent such an incident, but this is God's will," Saudi Hajj Minister Iyad Madani said Sunday. "Caution isn't stronger than fate."

Brig. Mansour al-Turki of the Saudi General Security Forces said about 10,000 security officers were on duty at the time in that area. They intervened and contained the pushing in about 30 minutes, but already 244 people had been killed and a similar number injured, seven of them critically. "Thank God I made it out. All I remember is the violent pushing, and then I lost consciousness. I woke up here," said Moroccan

Ahmed Azeel, who was hospitalized in Mecca with a concussion, abdominal and back injuries.

Khaled al-Marghalani, spokesman for The Health Ministry, said that 198 of those injured in the stampede were discharged and 46 remained hospitalized. They were in stable condition, he said.

Sunday's tragedy was the worst disaster at the hajj since 1997, when 340 pilgrims died in a fire at the tent city of Mina, near Mecca.

About 2 million Muslims are participating in this year's pilgrimage. To control the crowds, the Saudis set quotas for pilgrims from each country.

After the stoning rituals are completed, the pilgrims have to walk around the Kaaba, the black cubic structure in the center of Mecca's Grand Mosque, to finish the hajj.

Expert links bishop's windshield, victim of fatal hit and run

By Anabelle Garay THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHOENIX — Two star-shaped cracks on Bishop Thomas O'Brien's windshield were caused by a pedestrian's head and shoulder on impact, an expert testified Wednesday.

The cracks on the windshield matched the injuries on Jim Reed, the pedestrian who was killed, biomechanics consultant Patrick Hannon said. He spoke as a prosecution rebuttal witness as testi-

mony wound up in O'Brien's hit-and-run trial.

Attorneys were expected to

begin their closing arguments Wednesday afternoon.

The bishop, who testified

Monday and Tuesday in his own defense, said he initially thought he hit a dog or that

his car had been struck by a rock on the night of June 14,

See EVIDENCE/5B

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