# Over 550 Pilgrims Perish in Mecca Hajj Due to Extreme Heat: Climate Change Concerns Raised



During this year's Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, over 550 pilgrims lost their lives due to extreme heat conditions. The pilgrimage, which occurred from June 14 to June 19, 2024, saw temperatures soar to 51.8 degrees Celsius (125 degrees Fahrenheit). Reports indicate that 1.8 million Muslims participated, including 1.6 million from abroad.

The Saudi health ministry treated over 2,700 cases of sunstroke and heat stress on a single day. Most of the deceased were Egyptians, numbering 323, with other significant fatalities from Indonesia, Jordan, Senegal, Tunisia, and Iran. The death toll of 577 was confirmed by diplomats and accounts from hospital morgues in Al-Muaisem, Mecca.

The Hajj is one of Islam's five pillars and considered a once-in-a-lifetime duty for able-bodied Muslims who can afford it. Despite advisories to stay hydrated and avoid peak sun hours, many rituals require extended outdoor exposure. The Grand Mosque in Mecca reported record-high temperatures of 52 degrees Celsius, adding strain to an event already marked by massive crowds.

Saudi officials have attributed the high fatalities partly to unregistered pilgrims who bypassed air-conditioned facilities. Despite implementing health plans and crowd control measures, the extreme temperatures exacerbated the hazards faced by pilgrims.

Climate change remains a concern for future Hajj seasons, with experts warning of increasing temperatures affecting the pilgrimage dates. The Saudi government continues to enhance safety and health measures, although challenges persist due to the volume of participants and varying adherence to advisories.