

## **ANNEX -- BAQEE SUBMISSION TO UPR 2018 – SAUDI ARABIA**

### **SUMMARIES OF INCIDENTS REPORTED TO BAQEE BY PILGRIMS VISITING HOLY SITES**

#### **Incident Report 1**

The pilgrim was visiting holy sites during Hajj with a group of people from his workplace. They were all Sunni Muslims. The pilgrim is a Shia Muslim. Six police officers approached them, speaking different languages, and started insulting him. They called him the child of prostitution in several languages, waiting for him to react. It was clear that this was intended to provoke him. He responded in Arabic, and one of the officers held him by the shoulder and started to threaten him. The officers expressed that in Saudi Arabia if the pilgrim was put in prison, a report would never be sent to his embassy. They told him that as far as the Saudi government is involved, nobody would ever know what happened to him. At that point, one of the other members of the group, a Sunni, intervened and stood between the officer and the pilgrim. He was then able to leave and to go back into the crowd.

The pilgrim also recalls that in the Mount Arafat part of the pilgrimage, Shia Muslims were forced to set up their camp at the furthest point from the mountain, which forced them to walk several hours in order to meet with their group. He mentioned having to walk four hours to find his group.

In Jeddah, the pilgrim was staying at the Red Sea hotel. He recalls that on Fridays there were public executions. Foreigners would be forced to go to the front of the crowd and watch the execution.

#### **Incident Report 2**

The pilgrim visited Saudi Arabia for Hajj in 1992. At the time, he was still an Indian citizen. He mentioned that he did not comprehend all of it because he was young, but he knew that he was on holy ground. His uncle had asked him to bring back a pinch of dirt from the cemetery, so he picked some and put it in his satchel. He also knew his dad and uncle wanted him to kiss the ground while he was there, so he did. At that point, an officer came and grabbed his ankles to drag him out of the cemetery. The pilgrim fell on his face, and the officer shouted slurs at him while throwing him out on the street.

In 2015, the pilgrim was in Saudi Arabia for Umrah. He was reading from his prayer book while standing in the front of the crowd. An officer came to him and started disturbing him, so he closed his book and walked away. He then reopened the book once he was further away. The officer then called the guards, who came to stand behind him to intimidate him. Both the police officers and the guards started criticizing his religious beliefs, telling him he was wrong for practicing his religion this way.

The pilgrim then left the cemetery and went to the courtyard. Since women are not allowed inside, he planned with his wife to meet at a certain place outside the cemetery. As soon as he found his wife, some policemen came and told them not to

stand where they were. He asked why and where they should stand instead. The police did not answer, and just told them they had to leave.

### **Incident Report 3**

The pilgrim visited Saudi Arabia in 2006 for Hajj. He traveled with a group of people who were all Shia Muslims. When they went to the burial ground in Medina, he saw a lot of demolished sites, including a shrine which had been purposely defaced. When visiting the mosque, he was hit with a stick by people criticizing his way of worshipping, and shouting insults at him and calling Shia Muslims infidels.

### **Incident Report 4**

The pilgrim visited Mecca in 2007. He was praying in the grand holy mosque. Religious police then began insulting him and giving him a lecture about how Shiites are all infidels and attacking their beliefs. The police said that all Shia are cowards and that they should “purify” the holy mosque from being defiled by Shias. The pilgrim protested and was arrested. The policeman pushed him and then struck him. He then grabbed him by the hand and dragged him to the guard station inside the mosque.

Inside the guard station, another member of the religious police threw his boot at him and proceeded to beat him. The pilgrim screamed for help, and some other men from the pilgrim’s group came in to see what was happening. At that point, the guards started beating his friends - all of whom were unarmed and simply visiting to pray. The officers beat them for thirty minutes using their hands, walkie-talkies, bats, and even chairs. They screamed that the Shia men all deserved to die while doing so. After half an hour, the guards stopped, and took them to another location outside the compounds of the mosque. They were detained for another 14 hours without assistance. Finally, they were released only after they were forced to sign and fingerprint documents written by the police in Arabic, which they did not understand.

### **Incident Report 5**

The pilgrim visited Saudi Arabia in 2010 for Hajj. He went to Jannatul Baqee with a friend of his who wanted to take pictures. A guard saw them and came to them. He grabbed their wrists and said to them in Arabic that he was going to bring them downstairs under the grounds of Baqee. The pilgrim and his friend knew there was a jail down there. Since the guard did not speak English, they were able to make a plan to escape from him once he would take them outside. They managed to get lost in the crowd and to escape the guard.

The pilgrim was traveling with a group of people who were all Shia Muslims from the same sect. One day, a member of their group was sick and decided to stay at the hotel. There, the police came and falsely accused him of wrongdoing. They also took some of the papers the group had at the hotel, as well as some of their religious symbols.

A member of the group the pilgrim was traveling with was wearing a religious necklace. The police did not approve of it and made him take the necklace off.

### **Incident Report 6**

The pilgrim visited Saudi Arabia in 2012 with her mother and three sisters. She and her family were not able to visit Jannatul Baqee because of their gender. They had to sit outside of the wall that encloses the sites.

### **Incident Report 7**

The pilgrim visited Jannatul Baqee in 2012. He recalls seeing a lot of signs with religious phrases posted at the entrance. The phrases were only excerpts and were taken out of context. Some mentioned that the act of visiting the graves was prohibited. He explains that those signs are propaganda, meant to make visitors think that those religious sayings are the only truth. This is a form of passive hostility towards non-Wahhabis, suggesting that the government's interpretation of Islam is the only accurate one, and that therefore, all non-Wahhabis are infidels. The pilgrim was extremely upset and felt concerned for his safety.

### **Incident Report 8**

The pilgrim visited Saudi Arabia in 2007 with his wife and daughters for Umrah. In Medina, when he visited the big courtyard, he witnessed the guards pushing people towards the area where the floor has no air conditioning and the stones are very hot to sit on. He says the guards do so to force people to leave. He saw this incident happen every night that he was there.

In Jannatul Baqee, the pilgrim was not allowed to recite supplications. The police made offending comments to him, and prevented him from going to certain graves. He explains that for Shia Muslims, it is very important to be able to pray with their hands on the graves. The guards did not allow them to do so.

In Mecca, the pilgrim was not allowed to enter Jannatul Mualla (cemetery). The guards forced him to stay in the entrance area only.

### **Incident Report 9**

In 1978, the pilgrim was working in Saudi Arabia. He went to Jannatul Baqee and touched the sand with his palm, and kissed the ground. When he was walking towards the exit, a guard pulled his collar and hit him. The guard told him that he had stolen the dust from the cemetery. He was extremely shocked as he only touched the ground and kissed it to pay his respects. The guard brought him to a room and made him sit there alone. Later, an officer came and asked him why he was fighting. Luckily, the officer let him go.

### **Incident Report 10**

The pilgrim visited Saudi Arabia multiple times with his wife. He explains being always asked to show his card, which identified him as a Shia Muslim. Many times, guards prevented him from carrying his religious books. They took the books out of his hands and threw them away.

Once, the pilgrim tried to touch the crack in the wall where Shia Muslims believe the first imam was born. He and other Shia Muslims were hit by the guards when they tried to touch it.

In Medina, the pilgrim was offering prayers with a tablet that is specific to the area he was praying in. A guard came and told him to leave. The guard kicked his tablet from the ground, and then kicked him in the head. He grabbed the bottom of the guard's rope and managed to escape.

### **Incident Report 11**

The pilgrim lived in Saudi Arabia and had visited the Baqee cemetery several times. However, after moving away, she went back for a visit in 2015 for the month of Rajab. This time, however, she was told that women were not allowed to visit the Baqee cemetery. As she was standing close to the steps leading to the Baqee and reading prayers, a guard came and told her to leave. Later that night, as she was reading prayers in a different location further away from the cemetery, the same guard came back and told her she could not stay there. As she did not leave, the guard left to go get a truck and more guards, and they all told her she had to leave. Eventually, being concerned for her safety, she left.

### **Incident Report 12**

The pilgrim has visited Saudi Arabia for Hajj several times. Each time she has suffered threats and abuse as a result of her attempts to visit important Shia holy sites. She made her first trip in 1991. While reading prayers outside a site, she was shoved by a guard and fell to the ground. In 2000, she visited again, and was victim of verbal harassment near a Shia holy site. In 2005, she was prevented from climbing stairs leading down the path to the Baqee Cemetery and was prevented from getting close to it. In 2011, as she was walking in an empty courtyard near the cemetery, guards came, pushed her and yelled at her. Finally, in 2013, she was able to gain access to the cemetery, but once inside, was told to leave.

### **Incident Report 13**

In 2013, the pilgrim and his wife traveled to Medina. They arrived in the early morning and went to visit the Prophet's grave right after morning prayer. They decided they would pay their respects outside because they had heard that they may not be allowed inside the shrine.

Once outside the shrine, the pilgrim had a prayer book and started using it. At that moment, a guard came and told him he could not be there. He and his wife then walked away and decided to pay their respects further away from the site. However, the same guard followed them and told them they still could not be there, and told them to leave the area entirely. The pilgrim asked the guard what they were doing wrong. The guard then called over military police that arrived on a golf cart. The guards started grabbing the pilgrim and his wife, telling them to follow along

behind them. Fearing for their safety, the pilgrim told the guards he would go with them if they left his wife alone. They agreed.

The military police took him into the mosque building and brought him to an office inside. A higher ranking official was there. He snatched away the pilgrim's prayer book and instructed the others: "You see, these people, they come here and read these things, and their scholars tell them to be angry with us". He then referred to Shia Muslims using an offensive term.

Finally, the pilgrim was told that he could leave if he signed a form stating that he would not "cause any more trouble". Having no other choice, he signed it, and was able to leave and go find his wife.

- End