



## Muslims for Peace & Justice

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# Press Release #4

----- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -----

## CANADIAN MUSLIMS WILL OBSERVE HAJJ SEASON

(Regina, SK, Canada, February 5, 2003) In February, Muslims in Saskatchewan, across Canada and around the world will begin observing the activities associated with the annual Hajj, or the pilgrimage to the city of Makkah.

Hajj is one of the "five pillars" of the Islamic faith. The Hajj is an once-in-a-lifetime obligation for those Muslims who have the physical and financial ability to undertake the journey. The main activities of the pilgrimage take place during six days (8th-13th) of the Islamic lunar month of Dhul-Hijjah. Muslims regard the Hajj as a form of worship that involves the entire being: body, mind and spirit.

Pilgrims wear special clothing: simple garments that strip away distinctions of class and culture so that all stand equal before God. The pilgrims all face the cubicle structure in the center of the Great Mosque in Makkah called the Kaaba and offer prayers. The Kaaba is considered by Muslims to be the first Mosque built by the Prophet Abraham with his son Ishmael on the commandment from God. The Hajj is an opportunity for Muslims across the world to renew their brotherhood and express their common humanity, regardless of race or colour.

The main benefit of Hajj is the sense of purification, repentance, and spiritual renewal that it instills in all Muslims. After his Hajj, Malcolm X wrote in his autobiography: "...I have eaten from the same plate, drank from the same glass, and slept in the same bed - while praying to the same God - with fellow Muslims whose eyes were bluest of the blue, whose hair was blondest of the blonde and whose skin was whitest of the white. And in the words and in the actions and in the deeds of the white Muslims, I felt the same sincerity that I felt among black African Muslims of Nigeria, Sudan and Ghana...In the past I permitted myself to be used to make sweeping indictments of...the entire white race...Because of the spiritual enlightenment which I was blessed to receive as a result of my recent pilgrimage to the Holy City of Makkah, I no longer subscribe to the sweeping indictments of any one race. I am now striving to live the life of a true Muslim."

"The Hajj season is a time when millions of humble Muslims from around the world come together and devote their time in the remembrance of God and pray for the well-

being of humanity. Like other major faiths, pilgrimage is one of the cornerstones of the Muslim faith. Many of the 600,000 Muslims in Canada take part in this event every year, said Dr. Naiyer Habib, president of the Regina-based Muslims for Peace & Justice organization.

When the major portion of the pilgrimage is completed, Muslims worldwide gather for congregational prayers on the first day (February 11\*) of Eid ul-Adha (eed-al-odd-ha), the second of the two major Muslim holidays.