

Muslims for Peace & Justice

Press Release #15

MPJ

Saskatchewan Muslim Voice on Public Affairs

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In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE--

CANADIAN MUSLIMS WILL OBSERVE THE HAJJ SEASON

(Regina, SK 1/12/2004) Muslims in Saskatchewan, across Canada and around the world will soon begin observing the activities associated with the annual Hajj, or the pilgrimage to the city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia.

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 of the Islamic lunar month of Dhu-Hijjah. Muslims regard the Hajj as a form of worship that involves the entire being: body, mind and spirit.

"The Hajj season is a time when millions of humble Muslims, spanning all ethnic and racial groups, 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 Zeba Hashmi, General Secretary of Muslims for Peace & Justice (MPJ), a Saskatchewan-based Muslim outreach group.

Pilgrims wear special clothing: simple garments that strip away distinctions of class and culture so that all stand equal before God. The pilgrims 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.

When the major portion of the pilgrimage is completed, Muslims worldwide gather for congregational prayers on the first day (February 1*) of Eid ul-Adha (eed-al-odd-ha), the second of the two major Muslim holidays of the Islamic year.

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** Because the beginning of Islamic lunar months depends on the actual sighting of the new moon, the start date for Hajj and Eid ul-Adha may vary*

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