

## Arbaeen Pilgrimage to Imam Husain Shrine in Iraq A Modern Wonder.

What is Arbaeen? It is an annual event commemorating the 40<sup>th</sup> day after the martyrdom of Imam Husain ibn Ali, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them).

Approximately 1400 years ago on the tenth day of the first month of the Islamic calendar, called Muharram; Husain was brutally murdered by the ruler of the time, because he refused to submit to the ruler who demanded allegiance. Imam Husain, along with the male family members and supporters numbering 72-100 were brutally murdered after they were deprived of water and food for three days. They fought valiantly to defend themselves. It happened in the land called Karbala in Iraq. Imam Husain's sacrifice to defend the true religion of Islam, to uphold the truth and his refusal to submit to unjust, corrupt and depraved ruler has become a rallying point for many oppressed people of the world from all walks of life and across religions since that tragic event.

Some facts about this event in the year 2019.

- More than 21 million pilgrims gathered in the city of Karbala in Iraq from October 4 to October 19. They came from over 70 countries.
- Majority were Shia Muslims, but people of other faiths also revere Imam Husain.
- About 15 million pilgrims converged on Karbala on Saturday, October 19.
- People from hundreds of locations walked on foot to reach Karbala, covering a total of 2000 Kilometers of roads
- More than 100,000 rest places, mosques, private homes, tents, etc. were provided for pilgrims to rest or sleep overnight, at no cost to them.
- Pilgrims were provided with complimentary food, drinks, water and more.
- Other services included free long distance phone calls, articles for personal hygiene, medical services, security, etc.
- During this time some 125 million meals were served, averaging 8 million meals a day for 15 days
- 150 million liters of water and more than 500,000 tons of fruit and vegetables were served.
- Hot tea was served to the millions of pilgrims on demand every day.
- The total cost of food, drinks and supplies (excluding labor) was US \$500 million.

What makes this event unique in modern history is that private donations raised this money. Most of the funds came from people of Iraq. Donations also came from outside the country. The Government of Iraq did not fund the event. Voluntary medical missions came from different parts of the world, including several Western countries. The pilgrims were treated as honored guests and they were offered food and lodging and all services absolutely free.

Upon asking why the Iraqi citizens and other foreign groups do this for free, the answer was “for the love of Imam Husain.” This service to pilgrims is such that the hosts spend their wealth, time, energy, and demonstrate a strong desire to please them, expecting nothing in return from them, not even thanks.

When a pilgrim was asked why he traveled thousands of miles by air and walked on foot 70 kilometers to reach the shrine of Husain, again the answer was for the devotion and love of Imam Husain, and to experience the suffering his family underwent after his martyrdom.

History cannot find another example of a Martyr-hero who commands such love and devotion 1400 years after his death, by millions of people from all across the globe. The number of pilgrims keeps increasing every year.

Unfortunately, this modern wonder has not received due coverage by the mainstream media in the west.

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Adapted from Press TV, internet account and eye witness accounts.

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