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LETTER TO EDITOR

Ensuring Safe Nutrition for Arbaeen Pilgrims: The Role of Mawkibs

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Dear Editor,

Arbaeen Ceremony, the largest spiritual gathering in the world, attracts millions of pilgrims from across the globe each year to Karbala (1, 2). During this long journey, where devotees of Imam Hussein (AS) walk from various cities, meeting their basic needs—especially food—becomes essential (3). Mawkibs, established with love and devotion, play a crucial role in providing meals for pilgrims, demonstrating a lasting culture of hospitality and service (4).

Mawkibs along the Arbaeen route not only offer warm and nutritious meals but also provide a wide variety of foods tailored to the tastes and needs of pilgrims (5). From tea and dates to different kinds of soups, freshly baked bread, rice, and flavorful stews, all are served free of charge with the sincere intention of religious offerings (2). This hospitality not only meets the physical needs of the pilgrims but also fosters a deep bond between the hosts and visitors as part of religious traditions (3).

Ensuring food hygiene and health is a major challenge for mawkibs. Maintaining sanitation standards in the cooking and distribution process plays a vital role in preventing illness and safeguarding pilgrims' well-being (5). In recent years, collaboration between health officials and mawkib organizers has significantly improved the quality of food services. Health inspections, monitoring food storage conditions, and ensuring clean water usage are some of the measures taken to prevent health issues among pilgrims (4).

Fair distribution of food and addressing the special dietary needs of different groups of pilgrims should receive more attention. Elderly individuals, children, and those with specific dietary requirements must be prioritized (5). Some mawkibs are making efforts to create dedicated sections for these groups, ensuring they receive suitable meals. In recent years, an increase in the availability of dietary and health-conscious foods has been observed (2).

Beyond providing physical nourishment, mawkibs carry a profound spiritual message. Many of those serving in mawkibs consider their work an act of worship and a fulfillment of their devotion to Ahlul Bayt (AS) (5). Alongside meal preparation, kindness, compassion, and respect toward pilgrims are fundamental values in their service (3). Creating an atmosphere filled with spirituality and solidarity is one of the unique aspects of mawkibs that make the pilgrimage experience unforgettable (4).

Given the increasing number of pilgrims in recent years, there is a growing need for precise planning and modern methods to manage food distribution efficiently. Utilizing advanced technologies for food distribution management, minimizing food waste, and optimizing resources can enhance

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service quality. Conducting training workshops for mawkib organizers and encouraging the establishment of monitoring systems are practical solutions to improve food supply operations during Arbaeen.

Keywords

Mawkib Hosting, Arbaeen Ceremony, Food, Nutrition

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