

Daily News Friday February 13 2004

HAJ ARTICLE LOADED WITH PREJUDICED PHRASES

YOUR editorial published on February 4 captured the essence of our humanity regarding the tragic deaths of the Haj pilgrims. May God bless the deceased and give strength to their families.

You editorial also made references that need to be analysed for further debate e.g. “God’s will” and “non-Muslims.” The Saudi official blamed God (God’s will) for the tragedy and in this way hoped to absolve the Saudi government of responsibility.

This kind of reasoning means that certain people have knowledge of God’s will. It could apply, for instance, that there is no need for justice for the massacres of Palestinians and the demolitions of their homes, the bombings in the streets of Tel Aviv or of the deaths of commuters in Moscow.

It would also not make sense for the Saudi family to have ostracised Osama bin Laden (assuming he was responsible for the tragedy of 9/11) when all they needed to say to US President George Bush is that it was God’s will.

While your editorial did not intend to offend people of other faiths, beliefs and creeds, the use of the phrase non-Muslims suggests a subservient categorisation of people, of their culture and history. As a term that originated during an imperialist period, it demonises people by making their rights and their individuality exist by reference to Muslims.

These are not mere phrases on their own, but loaded with prejudice and discrimination. Part of Haj is to reinforce the concept that every human being is God’s representative on earth (Khalifah), as used in the Qur’an.

**SAYED-IQBAL MOHAMED
Durban**