Beat: Miscellaneous

Electrical fire at Saudi wedding kills 25, injures 37

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USPA News - At least 25 people were killed on late Tuesday evening when celebratory gunfire caused a high-voltage power line to fall onto a women`s gathering at a wedding in eastern Saudi Arabia, local authorities said on Wednesday. The accident happened at around 9 p.m. local time at a home in the village of Hijrah Jadeedah, located about 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) from the industrial city of Abqaiq, when celebratory gunfire hit a high-voltage power line and caused it to fall onto a tent covering the courtyard.

"The power line touched a metal door of the courtyard, which was the only exit, and caused some of the victims to be electrocuted," said Civil Defense Director Major General Abdullah Alkoshiman, as quoted by the English-language Saudi newspaper Arab News. Other victims died in a resulting fire. Authorities confirmed at least 25 people were killed while 37 others were injured. Most of the victims were women and children because the tent which caught fire was for women only, as required by the kingdom`s strict rules on gender segregation. Henna parties, attended only by women, are part of wedding festivities where artisans decorate the bride`s hands and feet. Eastern Province Governor Prince Mohammed bin Fahd bin Abdul Aziz expressed his condolences and sympathy over the loss of life and said he hopes those injured will make a speedy recovery. Local authorities also announced a special government committee will investigate the exact causes of the deadly accident. In July 1999, at least 37 women and children were killed and 132 others were injured when a blaze swept through a party tent in the eastern city of al-Qatif. And in April 1997, at least 343 pilgrims were killed and more than 1,500 were injured in a fire and resulting stampede at a tent in Mina.

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