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27 Muharram 1445 – 15 August 2023

HAWAII FIRE BLAZE ATHAAB SCORES KILLED!

***“WHAT! ARE THE PEOPLE OF THE
TOWNS SNUG IN BELIEVING THAT
OUR PUNISHMENT WILL NOT OVERTAKE
THEM DURING THE NIGHT WHILST
THEY ARE SLEEPING?***

***“WHAT! ARE THE PEOPLE OF THE
TOWNS SNUG IN BELIEVING THAT
OUR PUNISHMENT WILL NOT OVERTAKE
THEM DURING THE DAY WHILST
THEY ARE PLAYING (IN SPORT
AND AMUSEMENT)?***

***ONLY PEOPLE WHO ARE LOSERS
ARE SNUG REGARDING OUR PUNISHMENT.”
(QUR’AAN)***

The death toll from wildfires on Hawaii's Maui has risen to 67 as search teams combed through the smouldering ruins of Lahaina town and officials sought to determine how the inferno spread so rapidly through the historic resort area with little warning.

Hawaii's attorney general said on Friday that she was opening a probe into how authorities responded to devastating wildfires that has left at least 67 people dead.

The fires have become the deadliest natural disaster in Hawaii's history, surpassing that of a tsunami that killed 61 people on the Big Island of Hawaii in 1960, a year after Hawaii joined the United States. Fuelled by dry conditions, hot temperatures, and strong winds from a passing hurricane, at least three wildfires erupted on Maui this week, racing through parched brush covering the island.

Maui County officials said in an online statement that firefighters continued to battle the blaze, which was not yet fully contained. Residents of Lahaina were being allowed to return home for the first time to assess the damage.

Officials have warned that search teams with cadaver dogs could still find more dead from the fire that torched 1,000 buildings and left thousands homeless and will likely require many years and billions of dollars to rebuild.

'Nightmare scenario'

Three days after the disaster, it remained unclear whether some residents had received any warning before the fire engulfed their homes.

The island includes emergency sirens intended to warn of natural disasters and other threats, but they did not appear to have sounded during the fire.

"I authorised a comprehensive review this morning to make sure that we know exactly what happened and when," Hawaii Governor Josh Green told CNN, referring to the warning sirens.

Officials have not offered a detailed picture of precisely what notifications were sent out, and whether they were done via text message, email or phone calls.

Maui County Fire Chief Bradford Ventura said at a Thursday press conference that the fire's speed made it "nearly impossible" for front-line responders to communicate with the emergency management officials who would typically provide real-time evacuation orders.

"They were basically self-evacuating with fairly little notice," he said, referring to residents of the neighbourhood where the fire initially struck.

The Maui blazes are the latest wildfires that have struck this summer around the globe.

Fires forced tens of thousands of people in Greece, Spain, Portugal and other parts of Europe to evacuate, while in western Canada, smoke from a series of severe fires blanketed a vast swath of the US Midwest and East Coast.

The disaster began unfolding just after midnight on Tuesday when a brush fire was reported in the town of Kula, roughly 56km (35 miles) from Lahaina. About five hours later that morning, power was knocked out in Lahaina, according to residents.

By that afternoon, however, the situation had turned dire. At approximately 3:30pm local time (01:30 GMT Wednesday), according to the county's updates, the Lahaina fire suddenly flared up. Some residents began evacuating while people, including hotel guests, on the town's west side were instructed to shelter in place.

In the ensuing hours, the county posted a series of evacuation orders on Facebook as the fire spread through the town.

Some witnesses said they had little advance notice, describing their terror when the blaze consumed Lahaina in what seemed a matter of minutes. Several people were forced to leap into the Pacific Ocean to save themselves.

The Lahaina evacuation was complicated by its coastal location next to hills, meaning there were only two ways out, at best, said Andrew Rumbach, a specialist in climate and communities at the Urban Institute in Washington.

"This is the nightmare scenario," said Rumbach, a former urban planning professor at the University of Hawaii.

"A fast-moving fire in a densely populated place with difficult communications, and not a lot of good options in terms of evacuations."

Source: Al Jazeera and news agencies