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MJC to approach experts to explain symbols at desecrated Muslim graves

2019-10-31 12:13

Jenna Etheridge



The Muslim Judicial Council is trying to understand what motivated the desecration of around 80 graves at the Mowbray Muslim cemetery in Cape Town, in which headstones were arranged in a cross and other shapes this week.

"The headstones have been moved from the graves and it looks like cult things and signs that have been put there," the MJC's cemetery management committee head, Sheikh Riad Fataar, said.

Having visited the cemetery, he said it was a very sad situation because some affected families had only buried their loved ones a week or two ago.

"They have to go through the same pain and trauma again."

His concern was whether the vandalism would spread to other cemeteries.

"Some are saying it's Satanism, some are saying it has to do with Halloween. I am sending an email this morning to UCT's religion department to figure out what these symbols mean."

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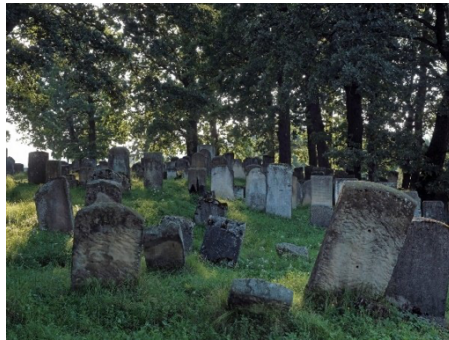
The desecration was widely condemned.

Mandla Mandela, the grandson of former president Nelson Mandela, said the perpetrators should feel the full might of the law.

"The violation of this sacred space is an evil act; it is an offence against religious sensibility, and defiles the values of peace, respect and dignity afforded to all citizens by our Constitution," he said.

"We appeal for calm and implore the Muslim community to allow the law to take its course as such wanton acts of criminality must be dealt with by the full might of the law so that the perpetrators may be brought to book."

Mandela converted to Islam when he married his fourth wife, Rabia, in February 2016.



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Mowbray Cemetery, Cape Town, desecrated this morning. Burial workers arrived at the upper part of the cemetery and found some eighty tombstones had been arranged in what appears to be cult symbols.



♥ 292 12:03 PM - Oct 30, 2019



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ANC spokesperson Pule Mabe said the party viewed the desecration as barbaric and an act of provocation against the Muslim community.

"We share the deep pain felt by families whose departed loved ones have been violated in such a raw and heartless manner. We commend affected families and the Muslim community for exercising restraint in the face of this naked provocation.

"All normal human beings everywhere in the world respect the dead and allow them to rest in peace. The graves are sacred places. Violating the dignity of the departed is unacceptable and unjustifiable."

The City of Cape Town's by-laws state that a person may not "in any way damage, deface or desecrate any part of a cemetery or anything therein".

Those who do, face a fine of up to R50 000, six months in jail, or both if convicted.

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Due to the weight of the marble headstones, Fataar believes the act was perpetrated by a group of people.

He said a considerable amount of relatives had already contacted them about identifying the headstones.

"We are asking the community to come forward if they have seen anything. We have also asked everyone that when you come to the grave, please don't take any pictures or videos of the names on the headstones."

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