

**CLOSE PROTECTION, DIGNITARY SECURITY AND PUBLIC SAFETY AT MASS  
RELIGIOUS GATHERINGS:  
LESSONS FROM HIGH-PROFILE PRESENCE AT MUZDALIFAH**

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**ABSTRACT**

The presence of a sitting head of state at Muzdalifah during Hajj illustrates the complex interface between dignitary security, close protection, and mass public safety. This paper analyses the security implications of high-profile participation in mass religious gatherings, examining risk and vulnerability assessment, threat vectors, crowd dynamics, and legal constraints. It integrates Nigerian and international scholarship to balance operational, legal, and human rights perspectives. The framework draws on Barrister Adebayo Akinade's *\_Managing Close Protection and Dignitaries Security\_ 2020* and his broader works, alongside texts by Nigerian authors and foreign experts including Gill & Phythian, Ratcliffe, Still, and others. Recommendations address intelligence fusion, protective formations, crowd management, accountability, and policy reform.

**Keywords:** Close Protection, Dignitary Security, Mass Gatherings, Risk Assessment, Crowd Management, Public Safety, Nigeria.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Background**

Mass religious gatherings such as Hajj concentrate millions in open, minimally controlled spaces. When a head of state participates, the event becomes a high-value target, introducing additional complexity for close protection and host security agencies.

**1.2 Problem Statement**

Dignitary presence enhances symbolic value but increases threat exposure, complicates crowd management, and risks diverting resources from general public safety. Without integrated protocols, close protection operations can create new vulnerabilities or infringe on public rights.

**1.3 Aim and Objectives**

**Aim:** To develop a framework for integrating dignitary security and close protection into mass religious gatherings without compromising public safety.

## **Objectives:**

1. Analyse risks and vulnerabilities associated with dignitary presence at mass events.
2. Examine operational models for close protection in open environments.
3. Assess legal and human rights considerations.
4. Synthesize Nigerian and international scholarship to propose reforms.

## **1.4 Methodology**

Doctrinal legal analysis, case-based assessment of the Muzdalifah scenario, and comparative literature review of Nigerian and foreign texts on close protection, event security, and intelligence-led policing.

## **2.0 CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS: HIGH-PROFILE PRESENCE AT MUZDALIFAH**

### **2.1 Event Profile**

Muzdalifah is an open plain where millions spend the night during Hajj. It features minimal infrastructure, open terrain, and high crowd density, creating unique challenges for security forces.

### **2.2 Security Implications of Dignitary Presence**

1. **Target Attraction:** Increases likelihood of terrorist or lone-actor attacks.
2. **Resource Diversion:** Close protection teams require advance teams, route security, and perimeter control, potentially reducing assets for crowd management.
3. **Crowd Dynamics:** Protective formations can disrupt natural crowd flow, creating bottlenecks and stampede risk.
4. **Symbolic Value:** Positive public relations if handled well; negative if perceived as elitism or disruption.

## **3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW: NIGERIAN AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES**

### **3.1 Nigerian Scholarship**

1. **Akinade, A. 2020. Managing Close Protection and Dignitaries Security. Lagos: ISN Press.**

Provides a Nigerian doctrinal framework for intelligence-led close protection, low-profile formations, and legal compliance in public spaces.

2. **Akinade, A. 2007. Managing Security In Tourism Cultural Festivals and Mega Events. Lagos: ISN Press.**

Outlines the four-pillar model: risk assessment, integrated command, crowd psychology, and post-event review.

3. **Akinade, A. 2009. Communal Conflict and Violence: Response, Resolution and Prevention. Lagos: ISN Press.**

Emphasizes early warning, community policing, and the role of traditional institutions in managing large gatherings.

4. **Oluwaniyi, O. 2011. Police and Policing in Nigeria. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.**

Analyses institutional capacity gaps and civil-military relations in public order management.

5. **Alemika, E.E.O. & Chukwuma, I.C. 2005. Policing and Perceptions of Police in Nigeria. CLEEN Foundation.**

Provides empirical data on public trust and its impact on intelligence gathering at mass events.

### **3.2 Foreign Scholarship**

1. \*Gill, P. & Phythian, M. 2018. Intelligence in an Insecure World. Cambridge: Polity Press.\*

Discusses fusion of intelligence and operations in counter-terrorism and protective security.

2. \*Ratcliffe, J.H. 2016. Intelligence-Led Policing. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.\*

Provides models for directing resources based on actionable intelligence, applicable to event security.

3. \*Still, G.K. 2014. Crowd Dynamics. Oxford: Elsevier.\*

Analyses crowd behavior, density thresholds, and stampede prevention in open venues.

4. \*Walsh, P.F. 2011. Intelligence and Intelligence Analysis. London: Routledge.\*

Covers analytical techniques for pre-event threat assessment.

5. \*Finn, R.L. & Wright, D. 2012. Unmanned Aircraft Systems: Surveillance, Ethics and Privacy in Civil Applications. Computer Law & Security Review.\*

Addresses legal and ethical issues in drone use for event monitoring.

Together, these works provide a balanced view: Nigerian texts ground the analysis in local context and legal framework, while foreign texts provide comparative models and technical methodologies.

## **4.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **4.1 Close Protection Doctrine**

Akinade 2020 defines close protection as a layered, intelligence-led discipline focused on threat detection, risk mitigation, and rapid response while maintaining the principal's freedom of movement and public dignity.

### **4.2 Intelligence-Led Policing**

Ratcliffe 2016 and Gill & Phythian 2018 emphasize directing resources based on risk and intelligence rather than static deployment.

### **4.3 Crowd Psychology and Mass Event Security**

Still 2014 and Akinade 2007 converge on the need to understand crowd behavior to prevent stampedes and manage panic.

### **4.4 Human Rights and Proportionality**

All protective measures must comply with the UN Basic Principles on Use of Force and Nigerian constitutional standards.

## **5.0 RISK AND VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS**

### **5.1 Threat Vectors**

1. **Terrorism:** High-profile targets attract ideological and transnational groups.
2. **Lone Actors:** Exploit open terrain and large crowds.
3. **Insider Threats:** Within host security or service providers.
4. **Crowd-Related Hazards:** Stampedes, trampling, heat stress.
5. **Disinformation:** Rumors that can trigger panic or attacks, Akinade 2018.

### **5.2 Vulnerabilities**

1. **Open Environment:** Limited control over access points in Muzdalifah.
2. **Predictability:** Publicized travel routes and schedules.
3. **Communication Gaps:** Between host security, close protection, and intelligence units.
4. **Resource Constraints:** Host authorities may lack capacity for simultaneous dignitary and mass crowd protection.

### **5.3 Consequences**

Loss of life, diplomatic incident, erosion of public trust, and legal liability.

## **6.0 OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR CLOSE PROTECTION AT MASS GATHERINGS**

### **6.1 Intelligence-Led Planning**

- Pre-event threat assessment using HUMINT, OSINT, and technical intelligence.
- Fusion cell integration with host authorities, per Akinade 2019 and Gill & Phythian 2018.
- Continuous monitoring of social media for threat indicators.

### **6.2 Protective Formations in Open Terrain**

1. **Advance Teams:** Conduct site surveys, identify evacuation routes, and neutralize threats pre-arrival.
2. **Protective Detail:** Use low-profile formations to avoid disrupting crowd flow, Akinade 2020.
3. **Counter-Sniper and EOD Teams:** Positioned on elevated and high-risk zones.
4. **Medical and Evacuation Teams:** Integrated into the protective detail.

### **6.3 Crowd Management Integration**

- Coordinate with event organizers to manage crowd density around the principal, using principles from Still 2014.
- Use behavioral analysis to detect panic indicators.
- Establish clear public communication channels to reduce uncertainty.

### **6.4 Technology and Surveillance**

- Drones for aerial monitoring, subject to legal authorization per Finn & Wright 2012.
- Body-worn cameras for accountability.
- Encrypted communications for close protection teams.

## **7.0 LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS**

### **7.1 Legal Basis**

- Nigerian Constitution 1999, Sections 33-46.
- Police Act 2020 and ACJA 2015 for arrest and detention.
- Cybercrimes Act 2015 for electronic surveillance.

### **7.2 Proportionality and Necessity**

Any restriction on movement, search, or use of force must meet legal thresholds.

### **7.3 Accountability**

- Mandatory after-action reviews, per Akinade 2007.
- Independent oversight by NHRC or similar bodies.
- Public reporting of incidents involving protective operations.

## **8.0 CHALLENGES**

1. **Balancing Visibility and Security:** High visibility increases risk but low visibility may undermine public confidence.
2. **Coordination Complexity:** Multiple agencies with different mandates and protocols.
3. **Resource Allocation:** Risk of prioritizing dignitary safety over public safety.
4. **Cultural Sensitivity:** Religious context requires respectful handling of security measures.
5. **Information Security:** Preventing leaks of protective plans.

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **9.1 Institutional**

1. **Adopt National Guidelines for Dignitary Security at Mass Events:** Based on Akinade 2020 and Ratcliffe 2016, standardize roles, command structure, and legal thresholds.
2. **Establish Joint Fusion Cells:** Integrate host security, intelligence agencies, and close protection teams, per Gill & Phythian 2018.
3. **Mandate Pre-Event Risk Assessments:** Conducted 72 hours prior and updated in real time.

## **9.2 Operational**

1. **Use Low-Profile Protective Formations:** Minimize disruption to crowd flow, Akinade 2020.
2. **Deploy Mobile Medical and Evacuation Units:** Integrated with protective detail.
3. **Implement Crowd Density Monitoring:** Use drones and sensors to prevent stampedes, Still 2014.

## **9.3 Legal and Oversight**

1. **Require Judicial Authorization for Surveillance:** In line with Cybercrimes Act 2015.
2. **Publish Redacted After-Action Reports:** Within 14 days post-event, Akinade 2007.
3. **Train Teams on Cultural and Religious Sensitivity:** To avoid provocation and maintain public trust, Akinade 2009.

## **9.4 Communication**

1. **Centralized Public Information Cell:** Provide verified updates to counter disinformation, Akinade 2018.
2. **Pre-Event Public Advisories:** Inform public of security measures and expected disruptions.

## **10.0 CONCLUSION**

The presence of a head of state at Muzdalifah demonstrates the power of symbolic leadership but also underscores the operational complexity of protecting dignitaries in mass, open environments. Effective security requires a shift from static, perimeter-based protection to dynamic, intelligence-led, and crowd-integrated models.

By integrating Nigerian scholarship with international best practice, states can safeguard dignitaries without compromising the safety and rights of the millions who attend such events. True protection protects both the principal and the public.

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