

Massive crowds bid farewell to Iranian general in hometown funeral



Tehran, January 7 (RHC)-- Millions of mourners thronged the streets in Iran's southeastern city of Kerman, the hometown of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, to attend a final funeral for the top defense strategist, who was assassinated by the U.S. military during a visit to neighboring Iraq.

The procession was initially scheduled to culminate in the burial service for the general and one of his comrades, but officials announced that the rituals were postponed due to the overcrowding at the site which made it impossible to carry their remains to the cemetery where they would be laid to rest.

The burial ceremony had to be canceled and is to be rescheduled at another date, which will be announced.

The remains of General Soleimani and Major General Hossein Pourjafari arrived at the Kerman airport early Tuesday, following massive funeral processions in the cities of Ahvaz, Mashhad, Tehran and Qom, as well as the Iraqi cities of Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf.

An estimated seven million mourners packed the 11-kilometer thoroughfare connecting the two Azadi (Freedom) and Imam Hossein squares as well as the intersecting side streets in the capital Tehran during Monday's funeral, according to the Coordination Council for Islamic Propagation.

From the early hours of Tuesday, large crowds of black-clad mourners began filling the streets of Kerman to pay their respects to the Middle East's most prominent anti-terror commander. Chants of 'Death to America' rang out across the city, with mourners carrying the portraits of the national hero.

U.S. President Donald Trump ordered a drone strike early Friday on General Soleimani's motorcade upon his arrival in the Iraqi capital at the invitation of the Baghdad government. The attack also killed Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), as well as eight other Iranians and Iraqis.

General Soleimani was viewed as the key figure in the Middle East battles that led to the collapse of Daesh, the world's most notorious terror group. Iran has sworn "harsh revenge" against the U.S. for its terrorist operation.

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