FFWPU USA: Seoul Stampede: Unificationists Join In Prayers, Mourning

Naokimi Ushiroda November 2, 2022



Photo courtesy of AP

Unificationists from across America and around the world are offering their heartfelt prayers to the people of Korea after a deadly stampede in Seoul claimed the lives of more than 150 people and injured many more on Oct. 29. Leaders of the Unification movement shared their deepest condolences to those impacted by the tragic event.



Photo courtesy of Reuters

"Our prayers go out to the families who lost their loved ones, to those who were injured, and to all the people who witnessed this horrific scene," stated President Rev. Naokimi Ushiroda on behalf of FFWPU USA. "We invite our members to reach out to family and friends in the Republic of Korea to support them during this time of grief and to help them to receive the mental, emotional and spiritual healing they may need."

The movement's affiliate organizations responded to the devastating event as well. "We are deeply shocked and saddened by the loss of so many precious lives, including young people with promising futures ahead," read a joint statement released on behalf of WFWP International by Dr. Julia Moon, WFWP international president, and Dr. Sun Jin Moon, WFWP senior vice president. "Our thoughts are with the people of the Republic of Korea during this difficult time. We continue to pray for the fast and full recovery of those who were injured."

Police say the <u>Halloween crowd</u> had up to 100,000 people gathered in Itaewon, a popular nightlife district, before many celebrants surged into a narrow alleyway and were crushed. With an understaffed police presence, partygoers performed CPR in an effort to save lives. In the aftermath, <u>mourners</u> laid candles and stalks of white chrysanthemums, a symbol of grief in South Korea, at a makeshift altar near the Itaewon subway station, news outlets reported.

For Sunhee, a young Unificationist in the U.S. with relatives in Korea, the incident hit close to home. "I was shocked about the stampede and all the chaos," she said. "I was thinking about my family but also the many people affected by this horrible situation. It's heart-wrenching that something like this could happen. My heart and prayers are with everyone in Korea right now."

News reports say all the victims have since been identified, with a vast majority being teenagers and young adults in their 20s who were mostly women. The victims include a well-known K-Pop singer, Lee Jihan, and at least 26 foreign nationals, two of which have been identified as young Americans. In a statement on Twitter, US President Joe Biden also offered his condolences.

"Jill and I are devastated to learn that at least two Americans are among so many who lost their lives in Seoul. Our hearts go out to their loved ones in this time of grief, and we continue to pray for the recovery of all who were injured," the president said.

Several world leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Kachiu, and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak also expressed their sadness and sympathies to Korea. "All our thoughts are with those currently responding and all South Koreans at this very distressing time," Sunak wrote on Twitter.



Photo courtesy of AP

First established in South Korea, the Unification movement is an international stronghold headquartered in Seoul. Founders Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, natives of modern-day North Korea, have dedicated their lives to peacefully reunifying their homeland and hold a deep love and respect for Korea's people. Prayer calls have been organized by various Unificationists nationally and worldwide.

South Korean flags were flown at half-mast at the government complex as President Yoon Suk-yeol announced a weeklong national mourning period until November 5.

South Korea Crowd Surge How a Festive Night Turned Deadly The Victims An 'Absolutely Avoidable' Disaster What to Do in a Crowd Crush

At Least 151 Killed as Halloween Crowd Surge Turns Deadly in South Korea

Dozens more were reported injured when they were crushed during a Halloween celebration in Seoul on Saturday night.

Published Oct. 29, 2022 Updated Nov. 1, 2022

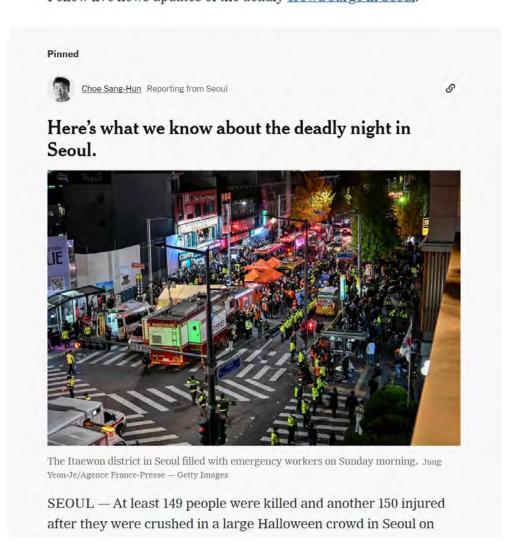








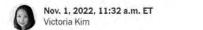
Follow live news updates of the deadly crowd surge in Seoul.



Saturday night, the city's fire department said, in one of the deadliest peacetime accidents in South Korea's recent history.

The crowd surge happened during one of the most raucous celebrations of the year in the nation's capital, where as many as 100,000 people, local news media said, had clogged the narrow streets of the Itaewon nightlife district Saturday evening for Halloween festivities.

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A nurse who treated victims at the scene in the immediate aftermath told MBC, a local broadcaster, that about 50 people laid out on the ground showed symptoms of cyanosis, or blue skin, or were bleeding from the nose or mouth. Some appeared to be bleeding from a fractured skull or had vomited, she said, adding most were without a pulse by the time she was on the scene around 11 p.m.



The tragedy is Korea's worst in peacetime since the 2014 Sewol ferry sinking.



A memorial for the victims of the Sewol ferry in Ansan, South Korea, in April 2014. Woohae Cho for The New York Times

The Itaewon tragedy is the worst peacetime disaster in South Korea since <u>the Sewol ferry</u> sank off the country's southwestern coast in 2014.

Like the ferry disaster, the majority of the victims in Itaewon appeared to be in their youth — out for Halloween festivities in the nightlife district.

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Dozens of bodies of victims were first transported to a nearby indoor gymnasium, where families had been gathering overnight. On Sunday morning, gymnasium officials said that those victims had been taken away. At least one police car and one local news station remained at the scene.



Sources: Locations of crowds and victims are from witness statements, videos and photographs. - By Marco Hernandez and Pablo Robles; 3D model of neighborhood by the Seoul Metropolitan Government.



Britain's prime minister, Rishi Sunak, expressed condolences to South Koreans in the aftermath of the deadly crowd surge in Seoul. "All our thoughts are with those currently responding and all South Koreans at this very distressing time," he <u>wrote on Twitter</u>.



The death toll has risen to 151, 19 of them foreign nationals, according to the national broadcaster, KBS.

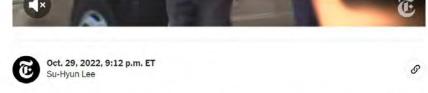
Oct. 29, 2022, 9:33 p.m. ET



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President Yoon walked to the narrow alley, site of the deadly episode.





Part of Itaewon-Ro, a boulevard intersecting a narrow hilly alley where people were crushed, was closed off Sunday morning.

Orange pumpkin-shaped plastic hats and garbage were left in the alley.



Anthony Wallace/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images



President Yoon Suk Yeol expressed condolences for the victims and his wishes for the speedy recovery of the injured. He said he was setting a period of national mourning and would make dealing with the aftermath a national priority. "In the center of Seoul, a tragedy and disaster occurred that should not have happened," he said in a Sunday morning address to the public.





'I could hardly breathe': A survivor of the crowd surge describes a scene of chaos.





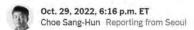
Injured people are helped after deadly crowd surge on Saturday. Lee Jin-Man/Associated Press

SEOUL — Kim Seo-jeong, 17, a high school student, was wearing the traditional Chinese dress known as a qipao, holding a folding fan, and her friend was dressed as a maid as they joined a Halloween crowd in Itaewon, a popular nightlife district in central Seoul, on Saturday evening.

They were excited to be there, having missed previous Halloween festivities because of the pandemic. But what was expected to be an enjoyable evening out soon turned into a nightmare, as thousands of people cramming into a narrow, hilly alley next to the Hamilton Hotel created a deadly crowd crush.

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Most of the killed were teenagers or in their 20s, said Choi Seongbeom, a senior official at Seoul's fire department. The dead included two foreigners, and 15 other foreigners were injured, Mr. Choi said, without specifying their nationalities.



President Biden expressed his condolences to the victims' families and extended best wishes for a quick recovery for all those who had been injured: "The United States stands with the Republic of Korea during this tragic time."



Families come to a makeshift morgue, waiting for news in a predawn vigil.

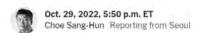


The body of a victim of the crowd surge, which left more than 140 people dead, is carried on a stretcher in Seoul. Chang W. Lee/The New York Times

Before dawn on Sunday, a grim gathering was taking shape outside the Wonhyoro Multipurpose Indoor Gymnasium, a boxy, silvery facility near the Han River in Seoul that in the early morning hours had also become a morgue.

As the toll of dead and injured changed rapidly late Saturday, and in the absence of detailed information about the victims among the Halloween tragedy, many families came to the gym to see if their loved ones were among the 45 bodies taken there.

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Early Sunday the death toll rose again, to at least 149, officials said. The official number of people still in the hospital dropped to 76, as some of the injured began going home after initial treatment. But officials said that at least 19 of those remaining were seriously wounded.



Jake Sullivan, the U.S. national security adviser, offered condolences and American support. "The reports out of Seoul are heartbreaking. We are thinking about all those who lost loved ones and hoping for a quick recovery for those injured," he said.





'We couldn't move,' says a witness to the tragedy in Seoul.



Matej Leskovsek/The New York Times

The blaze of neon signs and the jumble of big name brands, so familiar from nightlife districts in cities across Asia, made the horror of what unfolded in Seoul on Saturday night all the more jarring.

Ravo, Fireball Whisky and Oasis Bar & Cafe proclaimed advertising hoardings at one intersection of the city's Itaewon district. "Happy Halloween," read another big sign in yellow, red, pink and blue letters. It was all a magnet for young people looking for a good time.



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Twitter user @janelles_story, an American living in Seoul, filmed herself walking through the large, tightly packed crowd. She can be heard repeating, "Oh, my God," as the crowd began to sway. She made it home safely, according to her Twitter.



@ianelles story via Storyful



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Visitors from New York plan for a celebration, and instead stumble into a tragedy.

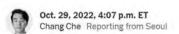


A group of friends managed to find each other in the crowd, only to see emergency workers carrying bodies on the street below. Benedict Manlapaz

SEOUL — Benedict Manlapaz, a filmmaker visiting from New York, arrived at the Itaewon subway station around midnight to see the streets jammed with crowds. The people, he said, were "irritated," with some crying.

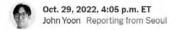
"People were shoulder to shoulder," said Mr. Manlapaz, 23. "There was no space to move."

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Families were gathering anxiously, waiting for news outside the Wonhyoro Multipurpose Indoor Gymnasium, where at least 45 bodies were taken, with more still arriving, officials said.



most of the dead and injured were in their 20s.



Matej Leskovsek/The New York Times



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Itaewon is a popular nightlife district in central Seoul.

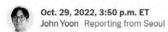


The Itaewon neighborhood, a popular spot for celebrating Halloween, during the Covid-19 pandemic in October 2020. Yonhap/EPA, via Shutterstock

SEOUL — Itaewon, the neighborhood where scores of people were killed in a Halloween crowd surge, functions as a hub of central Seoul.

By day, it serves as a traffic and logistics nexus, as it has for centuries, ever since invading forces like the Mongols and Japanese stationed their troops there. By night, Itaewon bustles as a premier entertainment zone, pulsing with stylish bars and restaurants, young patrons and foreign tourists.

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Yongsan Fire Chief Choi Seong-beom said that there had been no gas leak at site.



Of the 146 dead, 101 were transferred to nearby hospitals, including Seoul National University Hospital, Gangdong Kyunghee University Hospital, Hanyang University Hospital and Korea University Hospital, while 45 were taken to a multipurpose gymnasium near Itaewon. said Choi Seong-beom. chief of Seoul's

Yongsan fire department.



Associated Press



Kim Geun-jin, a division commander for the Seoul police, said that little could be reported about the cause of the incident as of 4 a.m. on Sunday because "identifying the victims is our top priority." He added: "Our forensic teams are focused on identifying victims and collecting evidence from the site."



A makeshift disaster management center is set up as rescue efforts continue.

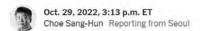


A makeshift disaster management center near the Hamilton Hotel in Seoul. $\,$ Chang W. Lee/The New York Times

SEOUL — As rescue efforts continued in the aftermath of the tragedy in Seoul, the authorities created a makeshift disaster management center and first aid clinic under several tents in front of Hamilton Hotel, near the site of the deadly crowd surge.

Whiteboards were set up there with information continually updated by the authorities, including the death toll, and a list of confirmed victims. A desk with a clipboard and a pen was dedicated to reporting missing persons.

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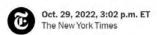


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The toll has risen to at least 146 dead and 150 more injured at the Halloween event in Itaewon, Choi Seong-beom, chief of Seoul's Yongsan fire department, said at a news conference in Seoul.



Matei Leskovsek/The New York Times



A public safety alert was sent via mobile phone to people in the area, urging them to return home as soon as possible.



Emergency vehicles struggled to make their way to and from the site, with roads jammed and pedestrians spilling into traffic. Around 10:45 p.m. one emergency vehicle packed with rescue workers sat in a traffic jam as it tried to make its way to a main road where victims were.



Yonhap via Associated Press



Medics and police officers, now gathered in the hundreds, say they are waiting to identify and confirm the dead. Officials say they will give a news briefing at 4 a.m. (3 p.m. Eastern time)



At least 25 injured people were taken to the hospital while rescuers were performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation on them. "The death toll could rise," said Choi Jae-won, a senior Seoul health official.





Matej Leskovsek/The New York Times



"There were so many people that we couldn't move," said Song Suyeon, 46, who was visiting from Incheon and arrived at Itaewon station an hour after the event. "It looked like I would have died if I had fallen."

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The Itaewon tragedy is the worst peacetime disaster in South Korea since <u>the Sewol ferry</u> sank in 2014, killing more than 300 people.



A procession of medics with stretchers is moving. Each is carting a body to an ambulance that is lined up on the street intersecting the main Itaewon road.



Matej Leskovsek/The New York Times



At least 120 people were killed and an additional 100 were injured after they were crushed under a large Halloween crowd in Itaewon, central Seoul, said Choi Seong-beom, chief of Seoul's Yongsan fire department. Mr. Choi said some of the injured could die, too. Of those who were confirmed dead, 74 were in hospital, with the rest taken to a nearby gymnasium. (An earlier version of this update misstated where the dead were taken. 74 were in the hospital and 46 were in a gymnasium, not the other way around.)



A wave of firefighters equipped with flashlights arrived and disappeared into the taped-off alleyway. They would not say what they were investigating.





Jung Yeon-Je/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images



Four blue-uniformed medics are carting a body on a stretcher on Itaewon Road, right outside the site of the fatal surge.



Itaewon developed as a district of bars, nightclubs and shops catering to American soldiers based nearby in the decades after the Korean War. Now, it is one of the most popular neighborhoods in Seoul, known for its nightlife, young patrons, foreign tourists and stylish restaurants.



Chung Sung-Jun/Getty Images



The stampede began at a narrow alleyway, right outside exit 2 of Itaewon station, outside a row of bars that included, among others, Oasis Bar & Cafe, Gathering and Ravo.



Matej Leskovsek/The New York Times

At least 59 people were killed and an additional 150 were injured after they were crushed in a large Halloween crowd in Itaewon, central Seoul, said Choi Seong-beom, the chief of Seoul's Yongsan fire department. Thirteen of those killed were taken to the hospital, with the rest still at the scene.

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"The top priority is to evacuate and save the victims. We should take them to urgent medical treatment as quickly as possible," President Yoon Suk Yeol told his cabinet, according to his office.



The crowd has subsided as the police take over. Several bodies covered in yellow sheets were sent off in ambulances. Late-night partygoers, some in Halloween attire, are still working their way home.



Matej Leskovsek/The New York Times



An emotional bystander at the scene who witnessed the event said he saw bodies, limp, on the street. "I wish I hadn't, but I did," he said. "It was heartbreaking."



A fleet of ambulances are parked outside an Itaewon venue where the stampede occurred. Trash is spewed all along the empty streets, which are now blocked by a phalanx of yellow-vested police.



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A health worker near the scene told The New York Times that she administered CPR to 10 people lying in the street.



Yonhap News TV via Reuters







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4 minute read · October 31, 2022 7:16 PM MDT · Last Updated 2 days ago

South Korea begins probe into deadly Halloween crush

By Soo-Hyang Choi and Ju-min Park



- Death toll rises to 154, 149 injured
- Government promises thorough investigation
- · Residents, officials offer condolences at memorials
- · Disaster is South Korea's worst since 2014 Sewol ferry sinking

SEOUL, Oct 31 (Reuters) - South Korean investigators combed footage on Monday from more than 50 state and private closed-circuit TV cameras as well as from social media looking for answers to how a surge in Halloween party-goers trapped in narrow alleys killed so many.

As the country began a week of mourning, the death toll climbed to 154. Another 149 people were injured, 33 of them in serious condition. At least 26 citizens from 14 countries were among the dead.

South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol called for a thorough investigation, and authorities said they were focused on reconstructing the lead-up to the surge and looking at whether anyone may have been responsible for triggering the crush.



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"We are analysing CCTVs to find out the exact cause of the accident," Police chief investigator Nam Gu-jun told reporters.

"We will continue questioning more witnesses, including nearby shop employees," he said.

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Tens of thousands of revellers - many in their teens and twenties and dressed in costume - had crowded into narrow streets and alleyways of the popular Itaewon district on Saturday for the first virtually unrestricted Halloween festivities in three years.

Chaos erupted when people poured into one particularly narrow and sloping alley, even after it was already packed, witnesses said.

Prime Minister Han Duck-soo, who steers a task force team handling the accident, said the identification of the victims was nearly complete and . . 4 4

tuneral preparations could move ahead, promising support for the bereaved families.

MAKESHIFT ALTAR

On Monday, people laid white chrysanthemums, drinks and candles at a small makeshift altar off an exit of the Itaewon subway station.

Jung Si-hoon, a retiree, placed an old wooden cross at the altar, saying nothing could be done to bring back all the young people who had died.



[1/6] A person mourns at a group memorial for the victims of a stampede during a Halloween festival, at Seoul City Hall Plaza in Seoul, South Korea, October 3 Read more



"Those poor people, all at similar ages to my grandchildren... What more should we say? We should pray for them and wish they rest in peace," he said.

On Monday afternoon, dozens of crime scene investigators and forensics officers descended onto the trash-strewn alleys which were early quiet with many shops and cafes closed.

One agent with the National Forensic Service team, in white overalls and a black ribbon of mourning pinned to his chest, operated a Leica 3D scanner, he said, "to capture the scene."

Yoon paid his respects to victims at a memorial altar near the Seoul city hall on Monday, a day after visiting the crush scene and designating Itaewon a disaster zone.

He also met Han and other officials handling the accident, calling for a thorough investigation, support for victims and their families and safety measures over unorganised large gatherings.

Yoon said he felt "indescribable sadness and responsibility as the president in charge of the life and safety of the people," and it was so tragic that many young people, in particular, lost their lives, his deputy spokesman said.

"Above all, it is important to thoroughly investigate the cause of the accident and transparently disclose its results," Yoon was quoted as telling the meeting.

"It is necessary to come up with a safety management system for preventing crowd accidents that can be applied to voluntary group events without an organizer like this one."

Schools, kindergartens and companies around the country scrapped planned Halloween events. K-pop concerts and government briefings were also cancelled.

The crush came as Itaewon was just starting to thrive again after more than two years of COVID-19 restrictions. The disaster is the country's deadliest since a 2014 ferry sinking that killed 304 people, mainly high school students.

Han said there had been incidents of people propagating hate speech by blaming victims, as well as incidents involving the spreading of false information and the posting of disturbing scenes of the crush online. A National Police Agency official said they were investigating six related cases.



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Reporting by Soo-hyang Choi and Ju-Min Park; Additional reporting by Choonsik Yoo, Joyce Lee and Hyonhee Shin; Writing by Lincoln Feast and Jack Kim; Editing by Gerry Doyle, Edmund Klamann, Edwina Gibbs and Philippa Fletcher

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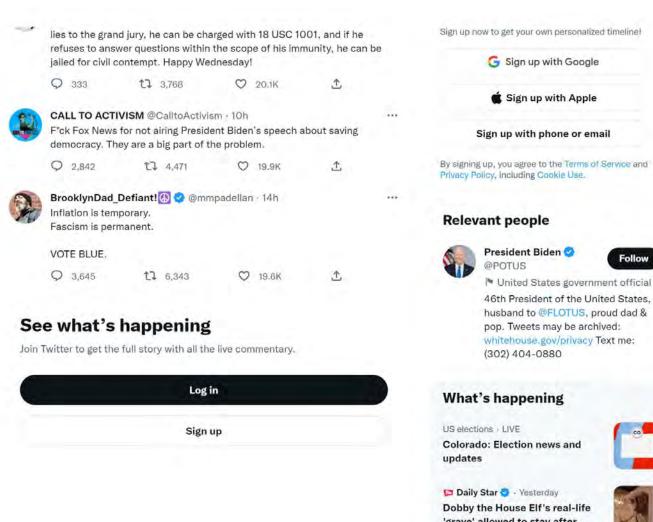
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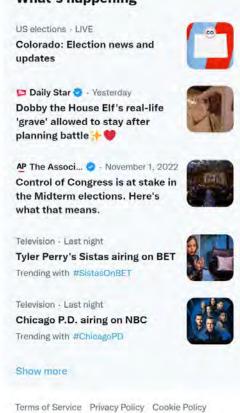


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