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JEDDAH – The district of Al-Basteen now has a giant pool of water which many residents fear holds the bodies of their missing relatives.

Residents here have gathered around it, waiting for it to dry, so that they can find out whether their family members have drowned. Civil Defense rescue teams have been called to start pulling out many decomposing bodies from the pool.

One of those thought to have drowned in the pool, which has become a breeding ground for mosquitoes and rodents, is Khedr Al-Salami. Al-Salami left his house on the morning of the rains to inspect the construction work at the mosque he was building for charity and in memory of his dead father.

His wife said her missing husband had spoken to her for a few minutes from his cellular phone on that fateful morning and told her where he was. However, when the heavy rains continued to fall she could not reach him on his cell phone.

His son Khaled said that they have searched all over for him.

"We looked for him everywhere, even under the rubble of the buildings. After a hectic search we found his car undamaged. It seems to me that the strong current of the floods swept him away. We walked for more than three kilometers searching for him. We started looking for him in Qwaiza Valley, under the wreckage of cars, even in the trunks of trees but came back empty handed."

"After this search we thought that he might have been swept into the Al-Basteen pool which is emitting an awful odor because of the decomposing bodies. We told the authorities at the Civil Defense about our suspicion. We asked them to send divers to pull out the corpses so that we could know the fate of our father."

Other residents of Jeddah, have equally harrowing stories to tell.

Bashir Al-Mould has called the day of the floods "Black Wednesday". He said he had driven to the livestock market with his young son when the deluge began.

"As I reached the Jamia Bridge, the rain started falling. Suddenly, it started falling in huge quantities and in a fraction of a second everything changed. All the cars were stuck in the floodwater. I spent hours looking for a way out without any success."

Frantic, he called his wife to hear if she was safe with their other children.

"She told me that she had climbed with our daughters onto the roof of the house because it was almost entirely flooded."

He said his daughter told him that they saw the floods sweep away many cars. Trucks were floating on the water like pieces of cork, they told him.

He said one of his daughters saw an old man carrying a child on his shoulders, taking shelter in a mosque. Both were found dead 16 hours later at the mosque, with the child still clinging to the old man.

Muhammad Hassan Al-Ameri said he lost his only child in the disaster. "It swept him away for more than 10 kilometers from our house. He had gone out to play with his little friend when the floods hit."

"We heard somebody calling for help and my wife went out to see who was calling. It was our son who was calling for help but the current swept him away.

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