

Dear Colleagues,

As-Salamu-Alaykum-Wa-Rahmatullahi-Wa-Barakatuhu

The blessed continuation of Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages in its normalcy are of paramount importance to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Muslim communities across the globe. The contributors, board members and participants of World Hajj and Umrah Convention join together in a unified expression of support towards the collaborative efforts made in tackling the effects of COVID 19.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has raised its assessment of the risk of spread and the risk of impact of COVID 19 to very high at the global level. This is a virus with serious impact on public health, the economy and social and political issues.

We are grateful to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for demonstrating great leadership and having taken early aggressive measures to stop transmission and save lives. In an unprecedented act of heroism, prioritising the health and safety of millions of intending Pilgrims, the Saudi Government has made a historic proclamation, imposing some temporary restrictions, suspending pilgrimage for both local and international worshippers, till further notice.

Kindly take a moment for reflection, Allah tells us that "If anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind" Quran 5:32. This epidemic requires us to educate ourselves, others and to be a part of the solution.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has taken ardent action, installing preventative measures as well as facilities to prevent loss of life and safeguard humanity; having sealed the holy cities from being a catalyst of this epidemic, thoroughly sanitizing the two holiest Mosques in Makkah and Madinah.

This is certainly a time of great difficulty for all those involved in the Hajj and Umrah Eco-System. COVID 19's cause and effect has sent across an unexpected tsunami, with detrimental rippling effects for Governments, Pilgrims and Businesses alike.

Leading Virologist, Dr. W. Ian Lipkin and director of the Centre for Infection and Immunity at Columbia University, who has investigated the Corona Virus, MERS and SARS in China, has stated that it may take upto one year with international collaboration to formulate a vaccine for COVID - 19. Precautionary measures are advised, prevention is not guaranteed and treatment for the symptoms are available.

Hajj and Umrah travel agencies should begin advising their Pilgrims' on being prepared for a range of eventualities including a possible extension for the suspension period of Umrah, extending till beyond Hajj 2020, according to some analysts. However, we caution speculation, encouraging you to continue your preparations, setting contingencies in place to safeguard yourselves from impending liabilities. There are insurance policies available that will cover the eventuality of cancellations based on medical force majeure. A sensible course would be to continue the sale of your Hajj and Umrah packages with financial protection built-in.

The political will and commitment in Saudi Arabia is strong, having mobilized the whole of government before cases even arrive, and continuing to be aggressive when cases arrive. All efforts are being made to provide a safe environment and the establishment of a large scale number of treatment facilities prepared to provide care for those effected with COVID-19.

Resuming the Umrah Pilgrimage to normalcy shall require international efforts and cooperation, resolute towards combating the spread of the virus and transparency from both individuals and authorities in reporting and treating cases. Mandatory preventative measures have been issued whereby passengers (Non Umrah) are required to provide a PCR Medical Examination Certificate issued 24 hours prior to departure by Saudi Embassy approved laboratories, confirming the passenger is free from Corona Virus (COVED 19).

To help support progressive decisions and to influence policy makers at the World Health Organisation, the Saudi Ministries of Health, Foreign Affairs, Interior and Ministry of Hajj and Umrah; Foreign Governments need to demonstrate the actions they are taking with their Pilgrims and the measures in place that can provide assurance, that no Pilgrim travelling to Saudi Arabia from your country is infected with the virus or from being an undetected carrier.

The WHUC is committed towards building a body of knowledge and producing a report that will outline the global impact of COVID 19 on the Hajj and Umrah Pilgrimage Eco-System. We look forward to working alongside you, helping raise awareness and education on such important matters.

Amidst fear of uncertainty, we have received a large number of enquiries, seeking advice on how to operationally prepare for Ramadan and Hajj 2020. A growing hesitancy is on the rise, incapacitating Pilgrims and Agencies from making financial commitments required by suppliers of products and services such as Hotels, Catering, Ground Transportation, Air Transportation and Hajj and Umrah travel package providers.

Official notifications are channeled through the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia and should remain your primary source of information to act upon. We are currently collating suggestions and solutions proposed by the international Hajj and Umrah community including respective government agencies that we work with. We welcome your input and shall present all credible and feasible initiatives to the relevant authorities involved in the planning and preparation of Umrah and Hajj.

To submit your concerns, initiatives, suggestions and solutions email us on [info@whuc.org](mailto:info@whuc.org)

Yours Sincerely,



Mohsin Tutla  
Chairman – World Hajj and Umrah Convention