

Current major event

Hajj 1438 H: no public health event of concern reported

World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO) deployed a team of experts, upon the invitation of the Minister of Health of Saudi Arabia, to support, assess and oversee the public health preparedness for hajj 2017 (1438 H). No disease outbreak or public health event of concern was reported among the nearly 2.4 million pilgrims visiting the holy sites during this year's hajj.

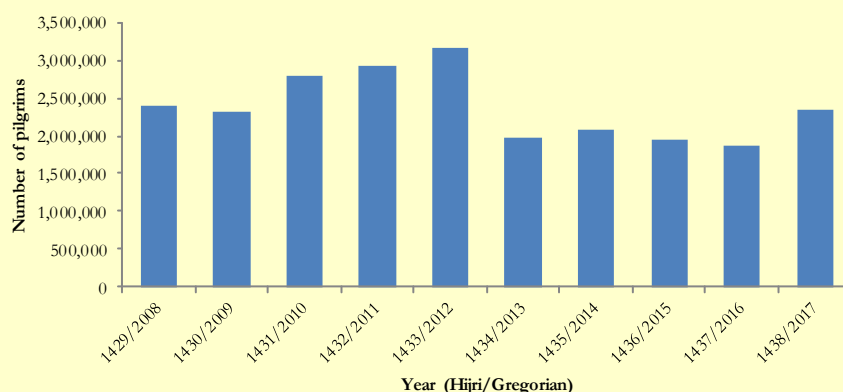
Editorial note

WHO's technical team worked collaboratively with the Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia to ensure that the public health preparedness, readiness and mitigation measures for early detection and rapid response to any health threats amongst the pilgrims remain effective, responsive and appropriate for such mass gatherings settings.

The team was deployed to Mina and Arafat, from 27 August to 4 September 2017, where nearly 2.4 million pilgrims assembled to perform hajj this year. They visited a number of health primary health care facilities and hospitals to oversee the health care services provided to the pilgrims, including the system for surveillance, notification and detection of any public health threats among the pilgrims. They also visited a number of camps resided by the pilgrims to oversee the sanitation conditions, and the risk communication campaigns in various languages being disseminated among for health promotion and protection of pilgrims.

Hajj mission was conducted as part of a range of activities undertaken by the WHO to support member states in ensuring effective implementation of the core public health capacities required under the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to any public health threat before it becomes an event of international concern. These activities are also outlined in the Regional Director's roadmap which details a set of strategic actions to guide WHO's work with Member States for the next five years

Number of pilgrims in the last ten years according to the General Authority for Statistics, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1429-1438 H (2008-2017)



Past major health events related to hajj

Event	Year	Description
Meningococcal meningitis	2000	caused by serogroup W135; more than 400 cases in Saudi Arabia and in 12 other countries
	1987	caused by serogroup A; Outbreak reported in Saudi Arabia and two other countries
Cholera	1982	102 cases reported in Saudi Arabia

(2017-2021).

In spite of an increased number of pilgrims performing hajj this year compared to the previous 4 years (*Please see the graph*), the hajj passed off without any major event or outbreaks reported.

In preparation for hajj, the Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia, with the support of WHO, developed a comprehensive plan to implement essential public health mitigation measures, including undertaking detailed preparedness and response efforts to address any potential transmission of cholera, MERS-CoV or other infectious diseases. In light of the current cholera outbreaks taking place in some countries, the Ministry of Health also undertook intensive preparedness and risk mitigation measures to prevent potential transmission of cholera from pilgrims travelling from these countries and no confirmed cholera cases have, so far, been reported among those attending the hajj.

As a result of the Ministry's intensive preparations and with the support of WHO's technical team, the hajj of 2017/1438 H has successfully taken place with no reports of any major public health events.

Update on outbreaks in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

MERS-CoV in Saudi Arabia; **Cholera** in Somalia; **Cholera** in Yemen; **Chikungunya** in Pakistan.

Current public health events of international concern [cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian Influenza: 2006-2017

Egypt (A/H5N1) [359 (122), 34%]
Egypt (A/H9N2) [3 (0)]

Chikungunya: 2016-2017

Pakistan [7,303 (0)]

MERS-CoV: 2012-2017

Saudi Arabia [1,712 (665), 38.8%]

Cholera: 2016-2017

Somalia [77,133 (1,159), 1.5%]
Yemen [646,132 (2,065), 0.3%]

Lassa Fever: 2017

Nigeria [788 (117), 14.8%]

Avian Influenza A (H7N9): 2013-2017

China [1,557 (605), 38.9%]

Dengue fever: 2017

Côte d'Ivoire [858 (2), 0.2%]

Wild poliovirus: 2017

Pakistan [4 (0)]
Afghanistan [6 (0)]

Zika Virus Infection: 2015-2017

84 countries and territories have reported transmission so far.