

Current major events

Pandemic H1N1 2009 and the Hajj Season 2009

At the end of the annual pilgrimage the Hajj, the Ministry of Health of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has reported 73 laboratory confirmed cases of pandemic influenza H1N1 2009 among the estimated 2.5 million pilgrims who participated in the ritual this year. There were 5 related deaths. The Hajj season took place in the middle of an influenza pandemic this year. In the months leading to the Hajj, the Ministry of Health with technical support from partners including the World Health Organization and CDC/Atlanta planned and put in place measures to prevent and/or minimize a major outbreak of the pandemic among the pilgrims.

Editorial note

The annual Muslim pilgrimage the Hajj has ended without the major flu outbreak that was anticipated by some experts. The Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia reported only 73 laboratory confirmed cases and five deaths among the nearly 2.5million pilgrims that participated in the Hajj this year.

It is worth noting that prior to this year's annual Hajj event, the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), with technical support from international experts invested a lot of time, money and effort to plan how to prevent and/or minimize a major outbreak of pandemic H1N1 2009 among the pilgrims. The Ministry of Health (MOH) held an international consultative workshop in Jeddah from 27 to 30 June 2009 on preventive measures against infectious diseases for Hajj and Umra, with a special emphasis on pandemic (H1N1) 2009 infection. The workshop produced some recommendations upon which the MOH issued public health guidance for the Hajj and Umra to be implemented by participating countries and the organizers of these public gatherings in the Kingdom.

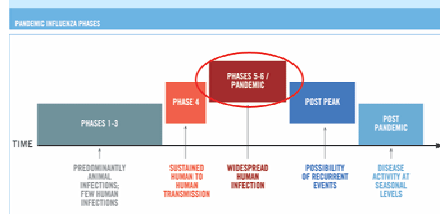
While it may still be too early to attribute this success and the low number of cases

EMRO's Selected Interim Surveillance Directives for Returning Hajj Pilgrims

Arrangements at the entry points

- Avoid congestions on arrival. Ensure that immigration formalities and luggage deliveries are achieved with minimum time and with minimum close contact between the returnee Hajjes and other staff involved in airport duty;
- Set up adequate hand-washing facilities and ensure availability of water and soap and alcohol-based hand-rub (wherever possible) at the arrivals
- All returning Hajj pilgrims may be assessed for flu-like symptoms where possible (This may include voluntary submission by the Hajjes, or examination at the holding facility if feasible);
- The returnee Hajj pilgrims with suspected influenza-like illness should be segregated from rest of the returnee Hajjes, should be put on surgical mask and be treated in accordance with national clinical management guidelines for pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus infection.
- All returnee Hajj pilgrims, on their return to home, should be advised to monitor their health and report to national health authority for any sign of unexplained and acute febrile respiratory illness within 7 days of their arrival;

WHO Pandemic Phases



among the pilgrims to the public health measures put in place alone, the contribution it made and the efforts of organizers cannot be underestimated. A post Hajj evaluation of this findings will be necessary to establish the impact of the measures taken and draw lessons for future Hajj seasons and other mass gatherings.

The Hajj pilgrimage provided perfect conditions for the spread of the pandemic H1N1 2009 influenza. There is still a possibility that the pandemic H1N1 influenza virus will be spread by pilgrims traveling from this year's Hajj and this could put pressure on health care systems around the world. The World Health Organization Office for the Eastern Mediterranean Region (WHO/EMRO) has produced and posted on its website a guidance on public health measures for reducing the spread of H1N1 by pilgrims returning from the Hajj. The office also encourages countries in the EMR to monitor and study the impact of this year's Hajj pilgrimage on the spread of the pandemic influenza H1N1 2009 outbreak.

Update on outbreaks

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 in all the 22 countries in EMR. **Human AI (H5N1)** in Egypt. **Kala Azar** in Southern Sudan

Current public health events of international concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian influenza

Egypt	[88 (27), 30.7%]
Indonesia	[141 (115), 81.6%]
China	[38 (25), 65.8%]
Vietnam	[111(56), 50.5%]
Global total	443 (262), 59.1%]

Kala Azar

S. Sudan	[403 (04), 1%]
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Chemical (Methanol poisoning)

Uganda	[132 (61), 46.2%]
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Pandemic (H1N1) 2009

AFRO	[15503 (104), 0.7%]
AMRO	[190 765 (5360), 2.8%*]
EMRO	[38 359 (330), 0.9%]
EURO	[154 000 (650), 0.4%]*]
SEARO	[47 058 (738); 0.6%]
WPRO	[176 796 (644) 0.4%]
GLOBAL Total	[622 482 (7826), 1.3%]#

CFR=Case-Fatality Rate

*Regions reporting now confirmed deaths only
Some regions no longer reports confirmed cases