

# HAJJ UNDER PANDEMIC CONDITIONS

WHITE PAPER RESEARCH BY WHUC FOUNDATION & HAJJ PEOPLE

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# Hajj Under Pandemic Conditions

The blessed continuation of Hajj & Umrah pilgrimages in its normalcy is of paramount importance to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Muslims communities across the globe. “Hajj Under Pandemic Conditions” is a phenomenon that adds an extra layer of complexity towards Hajj Management, creating new challenges and obstacles for industry stakeholders to overcome.

In the initial research project executive summary provided to the Saudi Ministry of Hajj & Umrah on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, based on the findings of our initial prognosis deduced on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, suggested a “COVID 19 Free Hajj” was feasible, provided that the right measures were applied at the right time, contingent on both Government & Public will here in Saudi Arabia and abroad. Our best-case scenario presented was that no more than one million pilgrims will be eligible to perform Hajj and a stay beyond 14-day period in Makkah could compromise the entire Pilgrimage in case of a rampant outbreak.

For the past 75 days, our team have been tracking 107 countries daily infection, recovery and mortality rates as well as how many Pilgrim’s intending to perform Hajj are likely to be infected with COVID 19. This monitor was introduced to estimate the international risk posed on the Hajj, evaluating the estimated pilgrim-to-human transmission of Pathogens and it’s impact. A second monitor was introduced to analyse the top 10 countries that posed the greatest risks based upon subjective and objective readings on their prevent, protect and medical capabilities.

However the WHUC Foundation Executive Board have decided not to publish these finding at this particular time, as we believe they contain political sensitivities and could be misused, counter to our objectives in supporting the development of a healthy Hajj and Umrah Ecosystem.

We express our gratitude to all our staff, colleagues, partners, volunteers, members and affiliates for their contributions, guidance, effort and dedication; facilitating the study to derive valuable insights and on-going research in pandemic Hajj.



## Qualification by Filtration (QBF) Model

This report is part of a greater document titled “The Masked Hajj Doctrine” a piece of work undertaken to provide a comprehensive guide on how to effectively navigate and mitigate risks posed by pandemics upon the entire Ecosystem of Hajj.

Health and safety being the primary concern, the welfare of pilgrim and public is placed at the centre of our study parameter followed by the religious, health, commercial, political and social divides, cognisant of it’s role, impact and contribution towards sustainability, growth and health of the Hajj Pilgrimage as well as the Umrah Pilgrimage.

This paper focuses upon Hajj 1441, COVID 19, mitigating risk measures and feasibility models. Highlighting in our commentary observations, implications, solutions and characteristics that the QBF Model posses and presents.

## Disclaimer

The WHUC Foundation is a Non-Government and a Non-Representative Organisation, independent of the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah and the Saudi government.

The WHUC Foundation recognises the sovereignty of the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah and the Saudi government as the sole authority on regulating the affairs of the Hajj and Umrah Pilgrimages.

The WHUC Foundation holds no authority on the affairs of nation states or policies developed by respective countries in managing their own pilgrims’ preparatory affairs.

The research undertaken by the WHUC Foundation, Hajj People and partners is part of an on-going process that continues to refine the data sets, information, knowledge procured, analysis both factual and conception. We continue to deepen our understanding in Pandemics and Mass Gatherings, regularly updating our reports as working documents.

The results derived are factual, documented and collated inline with Hajj People Knowledge Division’s research quality standards and practices. The data presented are subjective and objective as well as open for interpretation. Entities are wholly responsible for deriving conclusions and implementing devised strategies as a result of the presented study findings.

Hajj People has conducted this research observing ethical research guidelines as well as best practice methods. Hajj pilgrimage is a sensitive subject matter and requires caution, benefactors of this content are requested to observe ethical usage guidelines and ensure statements within this document are not misrepresented or taken out of context.



## WHUC Foundation Introduction

The World Hajj and Umrah Care Foundation (WHUC Foundation) is a non-profit organisation, established by Hajj People Company and Board Members as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility Programme. We are dedicated towards the development of a Healthier more vibrant Hajj and Umrah Eco-System.

Working alongside other NGO's, Institutions, both public and private. Intently focused on providing solutions centred on health, safety, security, hygiene, education, social well being and cleanliness.

Our unique ecosystem is developed over the course of 10 Years and present in Europe, Asia, Asia Pacific, Africa and the Middle East.

Our initiatives address our most pressing challenges, creating global opportunities in advancing the Hajj & Umrah sectors contribution towards the Pilgrimage and Pilgrim development.

We are a forward thinking organisation that understands the importance of education as the catalyst for progress and the tool for empowering Pilgrims and Industry to shape a more prosperous, enriched, empowered and enhanced present and future.

## COVID 19 Hajj & Umrah Means & Measures Team

Our Special Projects Division seeks to innovate ambitious and scalable solutions to address the challenges that came along with the advent of the COVID19 Pandemic.

The negative impact of COVID 19 on the Hajj & Umrah Sector can be felt across, social, political, commercial, health, educational and religious divides, impacting the entirety of the Hajj & Umrah Eco-System.

Our team of specialists represent a plethora of credible field experience and academic insight. Brought together for their expertise in Hajj & Umrah Management, R&D and Pandemics, the World Hajj and Umrah Care Foundation along within its partners' seeks to produce viable solutions to address the current challenges and to aid in the industries rejuvenation process.

## WHUC Management Team

Our executive leadership team overseas all the foundation's efforts. The committee meets regularly to ensure that all of our teams perform efficiently and to facilitate cross-functional connections.

The WHUC Foundation is an integral part of the Hajj People Corporate Social Responsibility Programme with on-going contributions being made regularly by Hajj People Company, Hajj People Board Members, Honorary Members and Volunteers.

Specialist teams are recruited to help meet our goals and to successfully accomplish initiatives incubated by the WHUC Foundation.

Our global policy and advisory leadership team oversees the foundation's work to build strategic relationships with governments, private organisations, philanthropists, media organisations, Hajj and Umrah policy experts and other key partners that are critical to the success of the foundation's mission.

## About HAJJ PEOPLE

Celebrating our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, Hajj People has created meaningful solutions for over a decade in more than 21 Countries. Our reach, influence, insights and impact has been the source for commercial, social and educational development across multiple sectors, ranging from Aviation to Pilgrim Welfare, from Pilgrim to Government Policy decisions.

Working alongside both private and public sector companies and institutes, Hajj People Divisions have revolutionized entire sectors for the benefits of millions of Pilgrims Worldwide.

Our purpose remains the same, contribute and cultivate quality initiatives that create value, develop a healthier Hajj and Umrah sector for future generations to continue benefiting from.



# Hajj Under Pandemic Conditions

## White Paper Research by WHUC Foundation & Hajj People

Hajj represents the ideals of more than 1.8 billion Muslims from across the globe, an obligation only mandatory in conditions feasible for able-bodied Muslims to observe. The risk of cancellation for this year's Hajj pilgrimage due to the coronavirus pandemic, code named COVID 19, shuddered the aspirations of 2.4 million intending Hajj pilgrims in an instant. The entire Hajj-Ecosystem holding its breath, paralysed and in wait, concerned with the uncertainty that shrouds every aspect of Hajj management and planning.

Historically, Saudi Arabia has overcome many great challenges, successfully warding off any instances that compromise the sanctity of the two holy cities and the holy pilgrimages. Acute Respiratory Syndrome viruses were made familiar in previous Hajj pilgrimages with SARS in 2002 and MERS in 2012. Yet, COVID 19 tumultuous characteristic has claimed the largest count of fatalities in modern day history with stealth, rendering historical experiences and solutions as passive.

With optimism, over 95% of stakeholders interviewed during the specialised research engagement voiced their vote of confidence, in support of the leadership and decisions made by the Saudi government. Echoed unanimously is the resolute confidence in the Saudi Ministry of Hajj & Umrah ability to help the Hajj and Umrah industry navigate the challenges posed by COVID 19 and rejuvenate the sector back to normalcy.

*"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. 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 pandemic, thoroughly sanitising the two holiest mosques in Makkah and Madinah. Saudi Arabia's commitment towards welcoming the pilgrims once again, as soon as responsibly possible, is positively echoed globally and appreciated across the World, as Muslims' you make us proud"*

*Hajj People & WHUC Foundation – Research Committee*



# Feasibility

With every passing day, the scale of anxiety rises amongst industry professionals and decision makers; the weight of this pressure can be likened to the water flow of the Nile held back by the Aswan Dam, without knowing when the valves will open for release and when it does, will there be a trickle or a forceful gush.

The question of feasibility looms heavily over the desks of every stakeholder involved in the Hajj pilgrimage, each with a unique mandate to uphold, being held accountable for their remits of responsibility entrusted upon them. Singapore officially sighted participating in Hajj 1441 as “not feasible”, the uncertainty and the limitation of time for making all the necessary arrangements for a “Hajj under pandemic conditions” simply not feasible for them; **how about for others? , how about at all?**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, the WHUC Foundation commissioned a specialised team of global experts in the field of Hajj operations, management, economics, epidemics & pandemics, policy writers, analysts, consultants, academics, scholars, mathematicians and researchers to answer one complex question, **“is Hajj 1441/2020, feasible?”** followed by, **if so, how?**

The study programme titled “The Masked Hajj Doctrine” designed to provide solutions for preserving a healthy Hajj & Umrah Ecosystem and to answer the question on feasibility took form as an international and global piece of independent research. Over the course of 60 days, Hajj People offices in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Dubai and Indonesia, interviewed and surveyed pilgrims from over 80 countries, 500 Hajj Agents and 25 Government Hajj Missions & Consulates in 13 languages.

This whitepaper provides a glimpse into the narrative being developed by the WHUC Foundation and Hajj People for the benefit of the Hajj and Umrah industry. Applying academic research methodologies, the study ascertains facts and empirical realities to help decision makers and policy commissioners; equipping them with the necessary and supportive insights to derive conclusions from, here in Saudi Arabia and abroad, aiding Hajj Missions and Agencies internationally.

The study findings are focused upon providing solutions for Hajj 2020 as well Hajj processions in the years to come. The documents are designed to underpin future study parameters and are translatable into health and safety policies to facilitate a new paradigm for management in Hajj preparations.

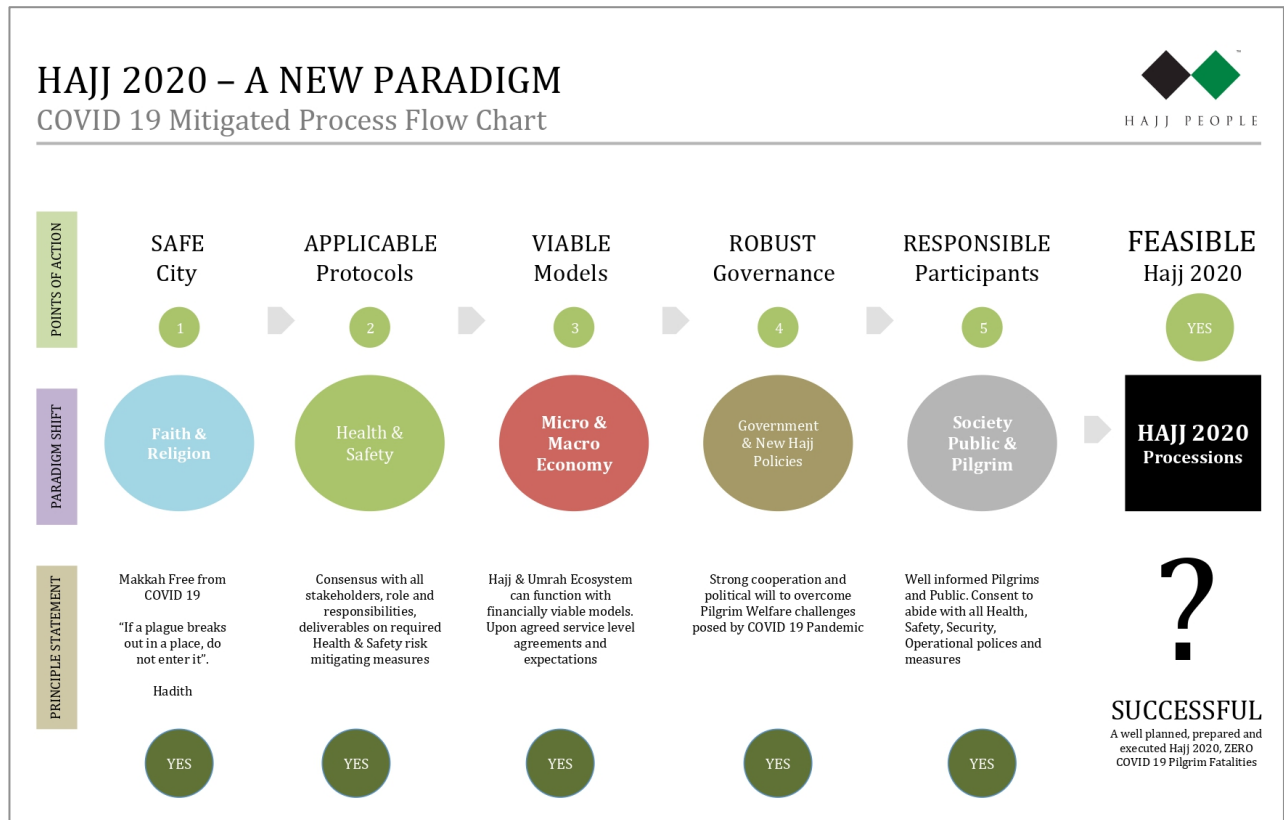


Fig 1: This slide denotes a 5-Step process required to be answered "YES" in sequence and priority to conclude a rudimentary notion of feasibility. For more information visit: [www.whucfoundation.com](http://www.whucfoundation.com) / [www.whuc.org](http://www.whuc.org)

### Q1: What is a successful Hajj?

Global opinion is unanimous that a successful Hajj under current circumstances is where the maximum number of countries can participate, irrespective of the number of participating pilgrims, reduced or as intended, with zero COVID 19 fatalities, zero COVID 19 transmissions. To a lesser extent zero COVID 19 fatalities, with managed level of transmission to less than 1/1000 being within Hajj under pandemic conditions.

### A1: If this is success, how to achieve it?

Evaluate the risks posed and imposed, domestically and internationally, remove or mitigate all vulnerabilities, introduce all means and measures proven or can prove to achieve zero COVID 19 related fatalities and no outbreaks.

# Qualification by Filtration – Pilgrim Selection Model

## Hajj 2020/1441H – Hajj Under Pandemic Conditions

The Qualification by Filtration (QBF) method was developed to support policy makers in Saudi Arabia, by exploring suitable models relevant to "Hajj Under Pandemic Conditions". Hajj People KSA in conjunction with the WHUC Foundation designed a prototype of this solution piloted and simulated the process with the government of India Hajj Committee. Detailed within this report are our findings and supporting commentary to help qualify QBF as potentially viable solution.

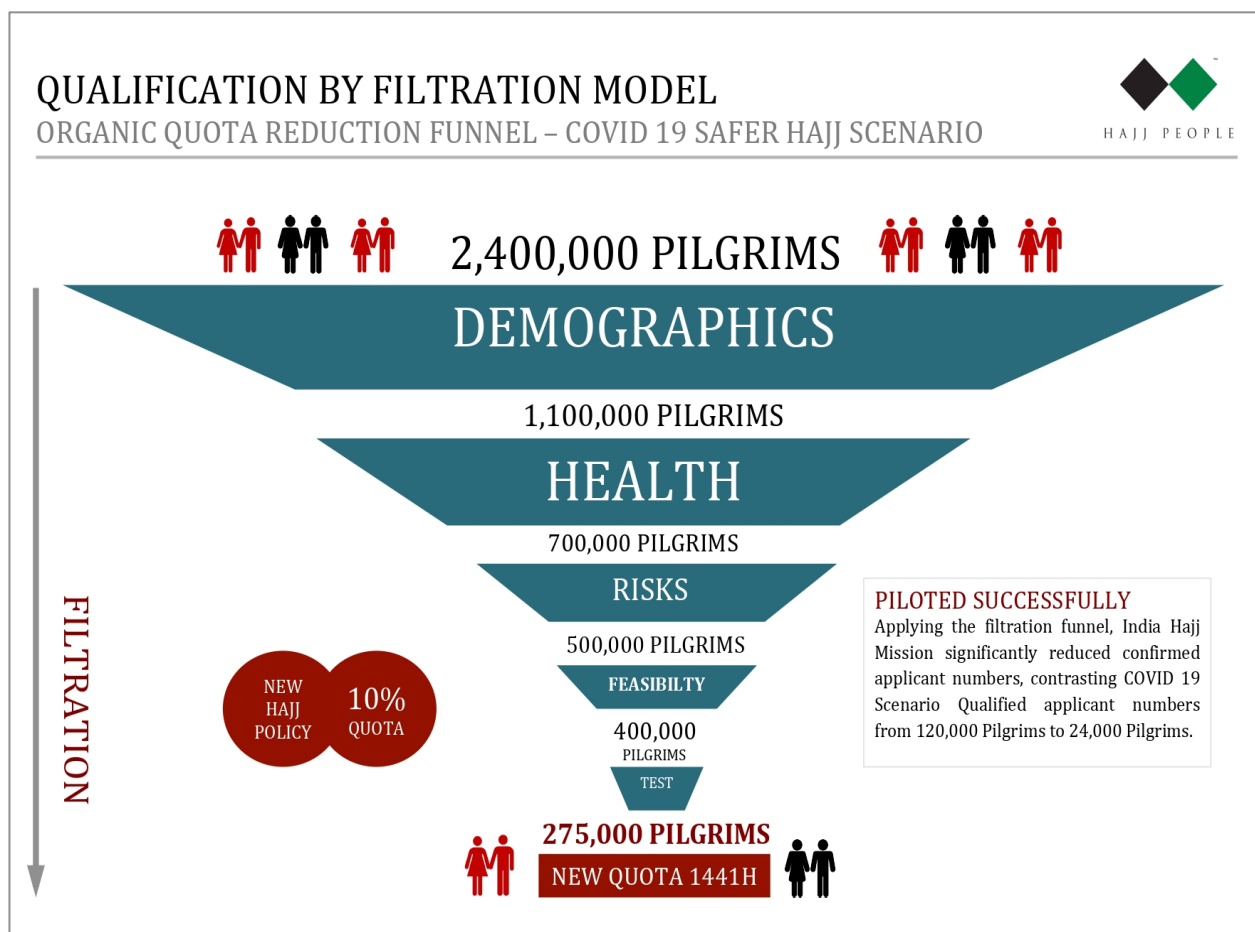


Fig 2: This slide denotes a 5-step process to filter known vulnerabilities that pose a risk to either pilgrim or the pilgrimage. Pre and post COVID 19 total expected pilgrims for Hajj 1441 stood at 2.4m, 1.8m international, 0.6m local Saudi's all included. Visit [www.whucfoundation.org](http://www.whucfoundation.org) / [www.whuc.org](http://www.whuc.org) for more information.

Pandemics are no longer considered an anomaly by any measure; rather it has become the daunting future in our reality. With an exponential growth rate of the human population and the proximity between communities narrowing, we can safely deduce that the likelihood of increasing numbers of pandemics is to become the norm. The COVID 19 strain of virus belongs to a family of acute respiratory syndrome pathogens, viruses that have historically plagued the Middle East with SARS and then later with the MERS epidemic.



Hajj is the annual convergence of over 2.4 million Muslim's, from every nationality and nation, a tradition upheld for 1,441 years thus far. Having identified the re-occurrence and entry of pathogens into the Hajj & Umrah Ecosystem, we have taken a futuristic view towards creating solutions for pilgrimages under pandemic conditions. Working alongside credible think tanks and organisations, our approach towards developing a relevant body of knowledge stemmed from our desire to contribute the sum of our experience into documenting contingency plans, simulating such scenarios in Hajj.

Hajj is a complex set of problems; particles loosely weaved together each year upon a rigid framework. This is the formula upon which many successful Hajj pilgrimages have been achieved. Our approach towards ascertaining the stated QBF model solution for Hajj under pandemic conditions was to firstly map out the Hajj and Umrah Ecosystem, identify all the stakeholders involved in the process, understand their roles, responsibilities and deliverables, impact of success and impact of failure.

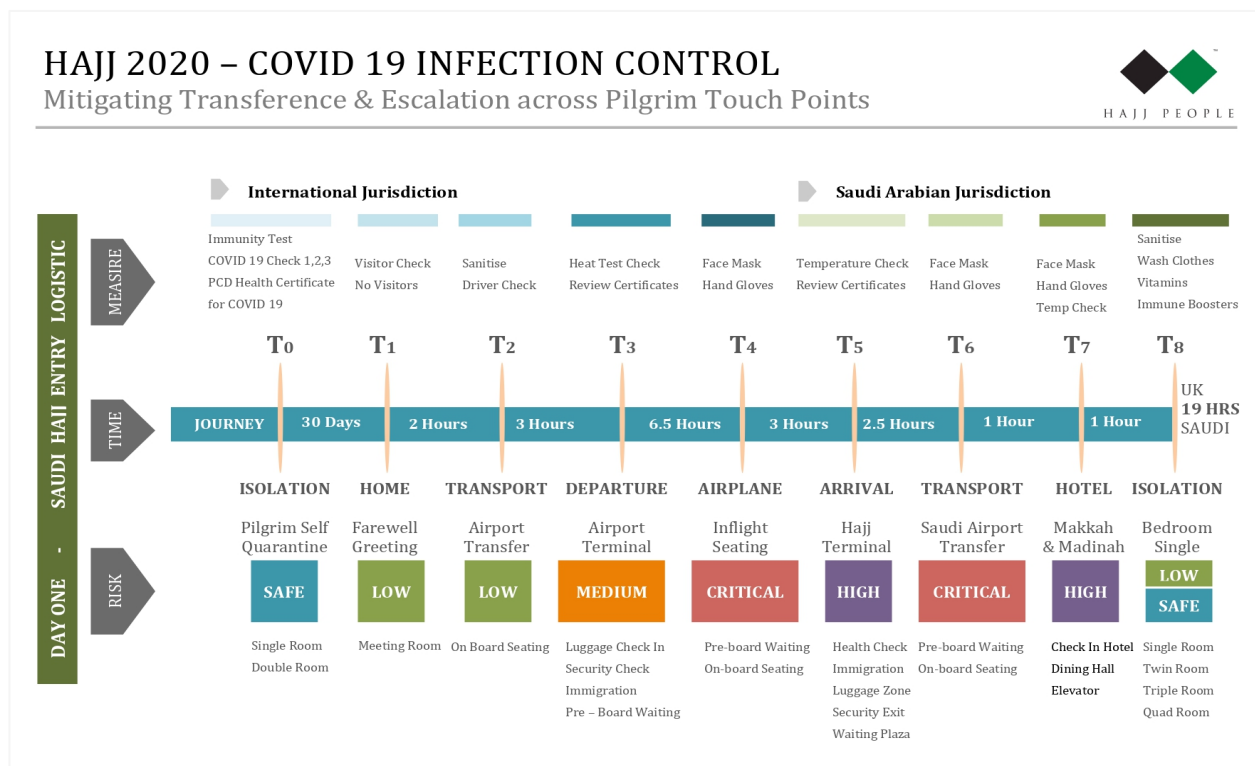


Fig 3: Significant reduction in pilgrim numbers mitigates risk across all the pilgrim touch points. Example from home till hotel, mapping journey 1 of 4 allows each stakeholder to know the additional responsibility to be upheld in the cycle.

Secondly identify the set of challenges and problems underscoring their objectives and identify the common denominator. Extract the set of common denominators, applying focus on the problem considered to be the bottleneck. In this instance, we found that stakeholders were unable to make any commitments or plans, due to their inability to derive any conclusions based on the available information. **Is Hajj going to happen?** Yes or No, If Yes, **What are the most probable scenarios?** , If No, **What are the most probable scenarios? What will the procedures be?**

The focus of our study was to research the possible scenarios where Hajj does take place, mapping out various scenarios and how feasible they would be. The underscoring factors of the common denominator in the scenario of Hajj does happen, were four; Readiness, Willingness, Feasibility and Contingency.

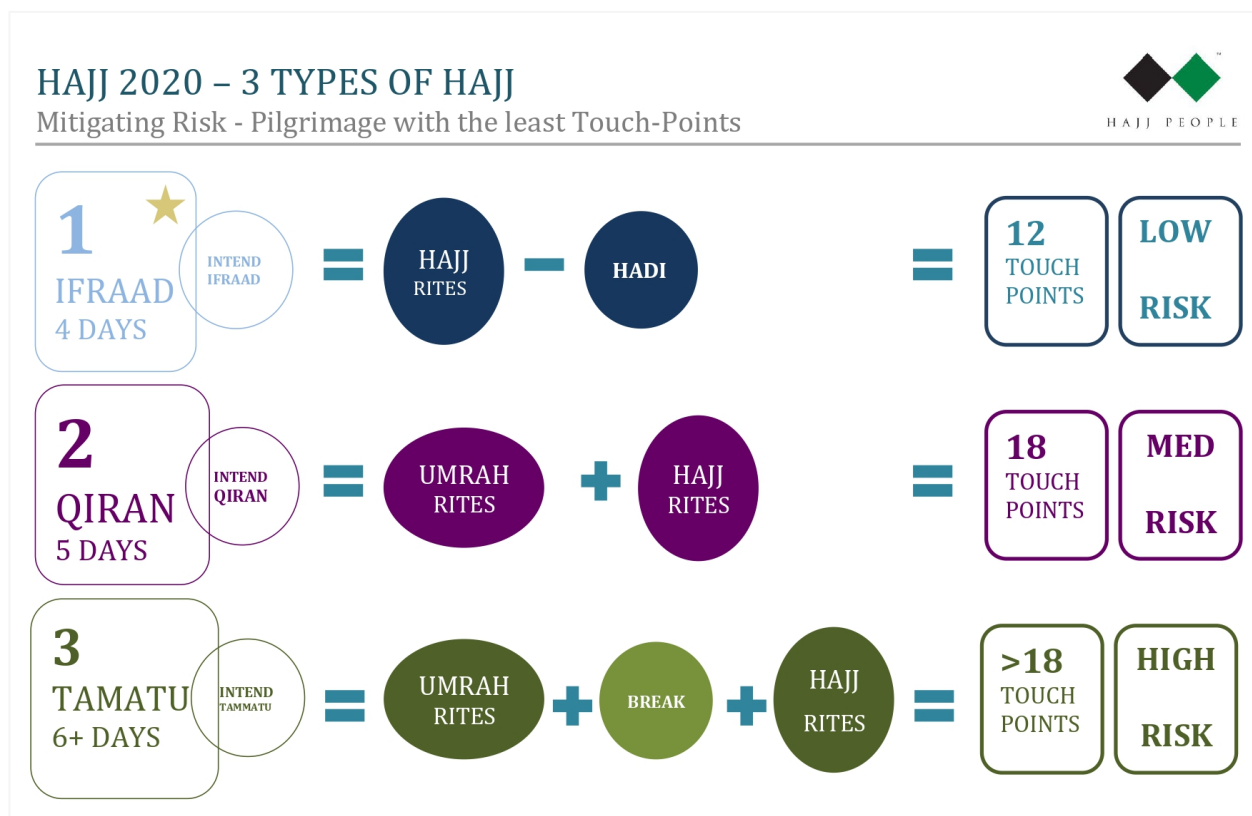


Fig 4: Example of Q13 of the Hajj Under Pandemics Conditions – Government Survey, evaluating willingness of pilgrims and Hajj Missions, assessing if a Fard Hajj was advised would this be a feasible option for their community.

To evaluate the characteristics of these four factors, we set upon interviewing and surveying industry stakeholders and senior government representatives in more than 30 Countries, unearthing the initial components which were later pieced together to form a model that would logically satisfy and identify Hajj Mission’s, essential unknown, **What will be our revised quota if Hajj does proceed? How will the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah derive this number if it is not based on the Organisation of Islamic Countries membership 1/1000 framework method?**

Our team of experts have collated a tremendous amount of insights and developed a filtration funnel as the universal solution, owning the potential to satisfy a large class of stakeholders in the Hajj Industry. An expedient policy that will allow decision’s to be made with confidence, accepting 275,000 pilgrims as the best-case scenario under pandemic conditions in Hajj 1441/2020.

As the host nation, the onus is upon the government of Saudi Arabia to determine whether it is feasible for them as hosts, to hold the Hajj, the scenarios and the policies that align best with their vision. What we have documented are points for considerations in the attempt to aid policy makers attain insights, never to have been presented before.

# Impact & Implications

## Qualification by Filtration Policy (QBF)

**Disclaimer:** The commentaries are referenced upon primary independent research and do not reflect the perspective of the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah or that of the Saudi government, the statements are derived from within the parameters of our study. The research is on going with continuous refinements being made, as new and richer facts are being identified and evaluated.

### 1. Capability:

The top 10 country Hajj Mission's possessing the qualities to effectively equip and facilitate pilgrim welfare requirements for Hajj under pandemic conditions include "Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Turkey, Malaysia, UAE, Algeria, Jordan, Philippines in accordance with our study". All established Hajj Missions with regulatory authority powers granted by their respective Parliaments retain qualified status to provide and apply the necessary means and measures including; pilgrim protection equipment, education, medical staff and attendants.

Established Hajj Missions possess the ability to systematically introduce COVID 19 "Mitigating Risk Measures" and the ability to introduce and exercise a "Qualification by Filtration Process" effectively and accurately. Capable of administering dictates and policies competently, including enforcing and monitoring them, effectively reporting and responding to changes, arranging quarantine facilities, conducting health checks, testing for COVID 19 fever and provide COVID 19 PCD clearance certification as well as establishing clear lines of communication with Saudi Authorities.

### 2. Filtering Vulnerabilities:

Risk elimination and risk reduction increases the probability of the possibility of a feasible successful Hajj under pandemic conditions. Qualification by filtering the most vulnerable pilgrims who are likely to suffer physically, emotionally, financially as a result of participating in Hajj 1441 increases the likelihood of a well-disciplined and organised Hajj procession.

Processing pilgrim applications through the 5 classifications of filters will subsequently reduce the number of pilgrim's eligible to perform Hajj under pandemic conditions from 2.4 million to 275,000 globally. The method of reduction through filtration includes: placing **1.** Demographics and age restrictions **2.** Venting pilgrims with pre-condition health anomalies **3.** Classify various risk sets as untenable for pilgrim to continue to the pilgrimage **4.** Personal and financial feasibility **5.** Health screening pilgrims, testing for COVID 19 infection upon a set schedule.

Filtration to safeguard the pilgrim from exposure to risks that the pilgrims' of themselves would not perceive, is the most responsible course of action that would be acceptable to both "qualified intending pilgrim" and "circumstantially unsuccessful pilgrim applicant"



### 3. Political Sensitivities:

Quota allocations are subject to intense scrutiny and political sensitivities, Saudi-Authorities introduced Organisation of Islamic Country (OIC) guidelines, subjecting member countries to admitting 1 pilgrim for every 1,000 Muslim citizen, thus retaining a uniform, fair and acceptable method of quota distribution amongst “Muslim Majority Countries” & “India”. Alternative frameworks have been applied to support pilgrim quota allocation in “Muslim Minority Countries”, reflective of Ministry of Hajj and Umrah discretion, represented by applied measures or meritocracy, needs and necessities.

Qualification by Filtration methodology wholly applies a new method, equally equitable and justifies the number of pilgrims admitted into the Hajj programme from each country. Achieved through evaluating individual nation states status and pilgrims’ levels of readiness, willingness, preparation and contingents. Filtration identifies the option of pilgrim numbers from a qualified position to travel through achieving the basic thresholds in safety, security and health levels as expected by Saudi Authorities and local health authorities.

### 4. Private Hajj Agents:

Affluent pilgrims in “Muslim Majority Countries” are predominantly selective of the facilities required to meet their needs when travelling, tending to opt in travelling with “Private Hajj Agents”, as they are able to provide bespoke services and tailor packages according to price brackets and capacity, affordable to the private pilgrim.

Hajj Missions, government organised groups have economical packages affordable for low-income bracket pilgrims. The price disparity between pre-pandemic Hajj packages and Hajj under pandemic conditions are likely to be significantly higher. With natural occurrence of price rises, with the introduction of additional health and safety measures, government organised group package prices are not likely to surpass the cost of private sector hajj packages, as they are on average 50% more expensive than government packages.

Government Hajj Mission’s commented their willingness to incorporate private sector pilgrims under government program pilgrimages, availing the opportunity for private opt pilgrims to travel under the administrative umbrella of government organised groups, making Hajj still affordable to private sector pilgrims with a compromise in their expected levels of services and amenities.

Private sector pilgrim’s affluence and educational levels under government managed organisation and infrastructure can compensate the drop in numbers from government-enrolled pilgrims, Pre-COVID 19, as the “Qualification by Filtration Model” is applied.



## 5. Resource Planning:

Hajj under pandemic conditions will drastically amend the pre-pandemic planned resource requirements, which includes, hotels and accommodation, air and ground transportation, catering, logistics and cargo, medical equipment, currency, telecommunication, pharmaceuticals and quality with quantity of staffing.

The filtration process immediately produces results deemed as responsible, acceptable number of pilgrims capable and strong enough to perform Hajj under pandemic conditions. This method provides a fast and efficient, justifiable estimate for possible quota projections. This process would enable policy makers in Saudi Arabia to communicate the number of pilgrims each country should or could prepare for in the event that Hajj for international proceeds under pandemic conditions.

Having identified Hajj under pandemic conditions at 12%, the “Qualification by Filtration Model” empowers decision makers to derive estimated number of pilgrims that can be rationally and safely accommodated and qualified. In turn communicated with Hajj Missions and organisations internationally of best-case scenario prospects in numbers for Hajj under pandemic conditions.

## 6. Point of Inflection:

The scope for International Hajj participation sharply narrows as the required time needed to make necessary arrangements, the qualification by filtration process requires a minimum of 37 days to administer depending on the capacity, status and competency grade of the Hajj Mission or Agency.

With less than 60 days remaining to the commencement of Hajj processions, Hajj 1441H nears critical point for planning, preparation and delivery on commitments. Generally pilgrims are welcomed as early as 30 days prior to the day of Arafat, hosting 2.4 million pilgrims in the process. Pre-COVID 19, GACA guidelines state that countries with more than 30,000 pilgrims must allow a 30-day period for arrivals and return departures.

Reducing Hajj capacity to 10%-12%, one-tenth of normal Hajj numbers, provides additional time for scaling down operations, preparation time, observation time on COVID 19 health risks, but only allows for a 7-day extension from the point of contingency in confidently planning Hajj operations for International Hajj organisations.

The Hajj Terminal was built to process a maximum number of 80,000 pilgrims in a day. 275,000 pilgrims as forecasted by the filtration method, could be processed within 4 days. Observing potential and possible additional health and safety measures and social distancing protocols, operating the Airport Terminal at 30% of capacity, lengthens the time to 11 days of arrivals.

## 7. Criticism:

Social Distancing has become the mantra of COVID 19; the global norm is to limit human-to-human interaction. Postponement of large-scale events such as the 2020 Olympics in Japan to the dereliction of coffee shop meetings between friends is understood to be the “responsible course of action”, sighted as necessary measures to combat COVID19 transfer, measures for mitigating adverse health and safety implications and for un-necessarily endangering the national health services capabilities.

10% of Hajj, representing numbers of excess of 240,000 to gathering in Mina, an area that is constricted to approximately 20 kilometres squared, Hajj Terminal at 465,000 square metres Masjid Al Haram constricted to 400,000 square meters, bottlenecks for pilgrim convergence will by any measure be understood as a compromise upon ethical health actions.

The perspectives of Muslim Majority Countries and its pilgrims and the perspectives of Muslim Minority Countries and its Pilgrims are in stark contrast and share the national sentiments. It is expected for criticism from government and media of Muslim Minority Countries in attempting Hajj at any level, and praise from Muslim Majority Country governments and media for attempting Hajj at any level.

Qualification by Filtration model framework provides a responsible method to install health and safety processes and measures agreeable, safe and responsible between Saudi government and willing foreign governments supportive of their citizens performing Hajj in year 1441H/2020.

An opportunity for leading the way, showcasing excellence in planning and preparation for how international mass gathering under pandemic conditions is possible, with adapted new protocols.

## 8. Disparity in Quota:

The Qualification by Filtration Model (QBF) will not reflect pilgrim numbers upon quota allocation or percentages. It enlists numbers upon meritable eligibility, which may differ amongst various countries. The cultural approach toward Hajj and the national GDP and other financial instruments in place is a critical factor to determine the disparity in quota eligibility.

The QBF Model is non-discriminatory, ensuring there is a higher grade in prepared pilgrims. Ensuring the quality of experience, as a global community convening is uniform and the commitment to meeting the required high standards in preparations and precautions are equal. The disparity concern, to remedy requires individual country assessment as well as individual country attention.



## 9. Emergency Medical Facilities:

Makkah accommodates in excess of 1.8 million residents, with the simulated Qualification by Filtration Model Hajj, adding extra 275,000 pilgrims to the city capacity of hosted population to a total of 2,075,000. This additional increase of 13% to the city inhabitants during the months of July and August will impact on the Makkah health facilities ability to treat patients with the highest level of care.

Makkah tally's 11 Hospitals, 4 in Arafat, 4 in Mina and 7 in Makkah City, with over 3,000 beds and 400 intensive care units, 80 highly equipped ambulances, 100 field ambulances, with historical conscription of 29,000 medical practitioners during the Hajj.

The importance of filtration subsequently reduces the risk of unmanageable care, having taken into consideration fitness levels, education, prevention measures, should an outbreak ensue. But with the level of additional medical attention provided in Makkah during this period combined would drastically the reduce risk of transmission and hospitalisation.

Makkah is currently classed as the epicentre for the COVID 19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia confirmed with 30,449 cases, 18,765 recoveries and 319 deaths as of the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2020 with a fatality rate at under 1% compared with the UK with a fatality rate of 14%, provides a sense of optimism in the city's capability to accommodate at 13% increase in population and it's ability manage unprecedented eventualities as a result of hosting a Hajj under pandemic conditions.

## 10. Pilgrim Confidence:

The research suggests introducing strict measures to mitigate health risks, filter the more vulnerable pilgrims, introducing precautionary measures, increases pilgrim confidence in observing Hajj under pandemic conditions.

The ability to manage, the entire Hajj process with 10%-12% capacity seems operationally feasible, the tent city of Mina is capable of accommodating 275,000 pilgrims with social distancing protocols of 2 metres between beds. The combined Saudi Airline carriers ability to exclusively ferry pilgrims within a 10-day period, brings additional confidence upon the possibility of Hajj 1441H/2020 being a reality.



### **11. Elongated Hajj Process:**

Under pandemic conditions, measures of the filtration process require mandatory quarantine, potentially adding 28 days to the entire Hajj process. 14 days prior to pilgrim entry into Saudi population and 14 days prior to re-entry into domestic home population. Having considered the conditions of the three forms of Hajj, Ifraad, Qiraan and Tammattu, the minimum process will necessitate 32 days and consequentially even 40 days.

Approximately 75% of the entire Hajj process would be spent observing precautionary measures. Identifiably, our study registers this as the main factor in Pilgrim participation hesitance. Further studies indicate that “Hajj Ifraad” minimalises the number of stagnant and moving convergence touch-points across the pilgrim journey, as well as significantly reducing the prospected duration of stay in Makkah.

### **12. Social Distance Compliance:**

The World Health Organisation has a special mandate to provide public advice as well as country and technical guidance. It is the only centralised body that coordinates with health organisations globally, having a local focus, intelligence with all matters related to pathogens and pandemics in 193 countries.

WHO advocacy on any matter related to COVID19 is received with reverence, hence their status as a body under the United Nations will impact the decisions of policy makers within respective government institutions; imposing their will on participating or not participating in Hajj should they feel that social distancing measures through-out the Hajj will not be applied with or enforcement measures not adequately in place.

“Qualification by Filtration-Hajj Under Pandemic Conditions” takes into consideration the WHO social distancing perspective and has developed insights with safety measures recommended by the World Health Organisation. Registering Hajj at 10%-12%, having mapped the various pilgrim touch-points can be observed with careful coordination, with buckle points such as the Mataf & Jamarat requiring timed rotation, effective crowd control management and crises management protocols in line with WHO mass gathering standards.



### 13. Extreme Filtration:

The QBF Model is cognisant of the fluctuating character of COVID 19, making the filtration measures more stringent in the event of sustained or rising numbers in infection reports. In the eventuality that the COVID 19 infection rates,  $R_0 > 2$  in Makkah, extreme filtration methods would be applied. At this point a symbolic performance of Hajj from various diplomatic missions would still be deemed feasible. As a reflection, the first Hajj in the holy history of Islam was participated with only 1400 Muslims.

### A. Continuation:

The above observations are provided without our conclusions, ensuring our support towards impartial interpretation by respective decision makers; permitting for quality evaluation of the content of this document. Our conclusions on the subject of “Qualification by Filtration Model” are exclusively reserved for the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah and the Saudi government being the hosts and the final decision makers on Hajj policies. Should the QBF model be registered viable or applicable by the Saudi Authorities; Hajj People Consultancy Division is equipped to support Hajj Mission’s and Agencies with COVID 19 capacity building measure in-line with international standards of excellence.

■ ■ ■

WE THANK YOU FOR REVIEWING OUR REPORT  
AS WELL AS APPRECIATE YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATIONS

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# HAJJ ON THE HEARTS AND MIND OF EVERY INTENDING PILGRIM

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