



All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hajj & Umrah

MINUTES OF MEETING

Held on:

Wednesday 1st March 2023

5:50pm – 6:30pm

Room S Portcullis House

1 Victoria Embankment, London SW1A 2JR

In attendance: Yasmin Qureshi MP, Imran Hussain MP, Tahir Ali MP, Khalid Mahmood MP, Lord Qurban Hussain, DI Kevin Ives (City of London Police), Steven Kettle (City of London Police), Mark Hydes (CAA), Rashid Mogradia (CBHUK), Dr Hina J Shahid (Muslim Doctors Association), Iqbal Patel and Imam Asim Hafiz.

Agenda

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. Apologies received from Naz Shah MP, Afzal Khan MP, Steve Abrahamson (ABTA), Cmdr Umer Khan (City of London Police), Mohammed Tariq (Birmingham Trading Standards), Tony Quigley (Birmingham Trading

Standards), Abdul Wahab (National Pilgrims Organisers Association).

3. The chair reported that a cross party group of Muslim MP's had recently visited Saudi Arabia at the invitation of the Saudi Shura Council. The MP's comprised of Yasmin Qureshi MP (Lab), Imran Hussain MP (Lab) Tahir Ali MP (Lab), Rehman Chisti MP(Con), Baroness Uddin (Independent), and Lord Qurban Hussain (Lib Dem). During this visit they had the opportunity to meet with the Deputy Minister of Hajj & Umrah Dr Abdul Fattah Al Mashat and his team.

The MP's praised the successful Umrah season and the ease at which the evisa was allowing pilgrims to apply and travel for Umrah. They commended the efforts by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and services provided to British pilgrims.

They took the opportunity to raise issues around the previous Hajj organised by Motawif in 2022 and were given assurances that Hajj for 2023 would be organised via the new Nusuk Hajj portal under the responsibility of the Ministry of Hajj & Umrah. The core aims is to make Hajj a) Cost effective, b) secure, and c) focus on service.

The MP's were advised that the new Nusuk Hajj platform would be available for around 58 countries in the west –

including the UK and that the Hajj quota for pilgrims would be in line with Muslim majority countries and that the UK would have around 3,600 Hajj quota instead of the 25,000+ (pre COVID). The MPs urged the Ministry of Hajj to reconsider its blanket decision as the UK had met and exceeded its Hajj quote. The reduction would have a detrimental effect on Muslim wanting to perform Hajj from the UK as they could end up waiting between 5 and 10 years. Concerns were also raised over the mechanism to monitor and record Hajj applications and process to make it fair for people to go on Hajj.

ACTION: Chair to write to the concerned authorities to:

1. Highlight case to reinstate the Hajj quote to pre-covid levels (i.e 25,000+)
2. Seek clarification over dealing with Agents who are offering Hajj packages
3. Seek clarity on protection for British pilgrims
4. How would refunds & compensation be applied in the event of non delivery of services

The Chair was disappointed that no one from the Licensed Hajj Organisers were present at the meeting despite being invited.

4. Hajj 2023

- a. City of London Police – DI Kevin Ives reported that they were looking to publish messaging around booking of Hajj packages and had already had meeting with key stakeholders (CAA, ABTA, CBHUK). Historically reporting for Hajj travel fraud had remained very low (2022 showed only 8 reports) however they understood that this figure was not conclusive. Concerns over the new Nusuk Hajj portal offering cash payments to be made would open up unscrupulous agents to insert themselves into the booking process. Given that no tour operator can legally sell a Hajj package, this was a great concern.
 - b. Civil Aviation Authority – Mark Hydes reported that anyone offering to sell a Hajj package for 2023 would be acting in breach of ATOL regulations and UK Package Travel Regulations.
5. AOB – Dr Hina J. Shahid reported that she had been advising CBHUK on the health requirements for Hajj in line with the requirements published by the Saudi authorities and will continue to monitor developments and advise accordingly. This information was being shared via CBHUK’s website and social media an public kept up to date.
6. The meeting concluded at 6:35pm