

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The COVID Narrative

How KSA Handled The COVID Situation & the Role of
Major Scholars in KSA

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الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على نبينا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين ، وبعد

Extracts From Official MOH Publication

The attached extracts are from a MOH KSA publication, which probably is the most authentic /official narrative (available publicly) on how the COVID situation was handled in KSA.

Reference:

<https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/Ministry/MediaCenter/Publications/Documents/COVID-19-NATIONAL.pdf>

Note: There is an additional attachment where I have simplified the overall KSA COVID Governance Model – COVID Governance Illustration PDF (1pg). this can be found towards the end of this PDF.

Extract 1: Establishment of committee by way of Royal Decree.

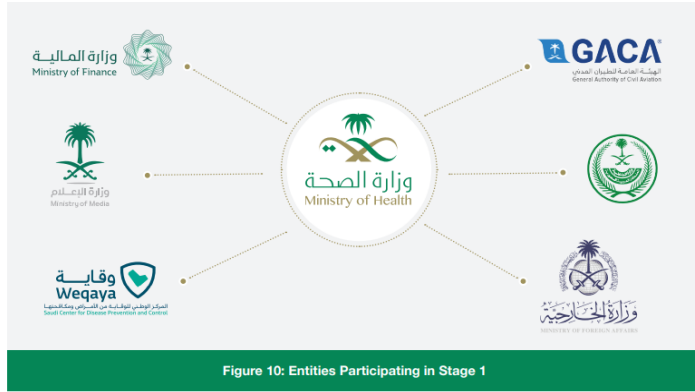
The Kingdom's response started early in two phases. The first phase was per the Royal Decree dated 01/06/1441 AH, on the establishment of the High Committee in charge of taking the precautionary measures needed to prevent the spread of COVID-19, headed by the Deputyship of the Ministry of Health for Public Health, and composed of six participating entities (Figure 10). Based on the assessment of the global situation, the Kingdom upgraded its response to the second stage as per the Royal Decree dated 07/06/1441 AH, on the establishment of the Concerned Committee in charge of taking the necessary precautions to curb the spread of COVID-19 in the Kingdom, chaired by His Excellency the Minister of Health, and composed of participating entities as shown in (Figure 11). To implement decisions, the Ministry of Health (MoH) created a hierarchical organization for the pandemic response (Figure 12).

Key Points

1. **Two-phase response** initiated via Royal Decrees to manage COVID-19.
2. **Phase 1** led by Public Health Deputyship (part of MOH); **Phase 2** chaired by the Minister of Health.
3. **Multi-entity coordination** involved in both phases.
4. **Hierarchical structure** established by MoH to implement decisions.

Extract 2: List of Participating Entities – Stage 1.

Stage 1



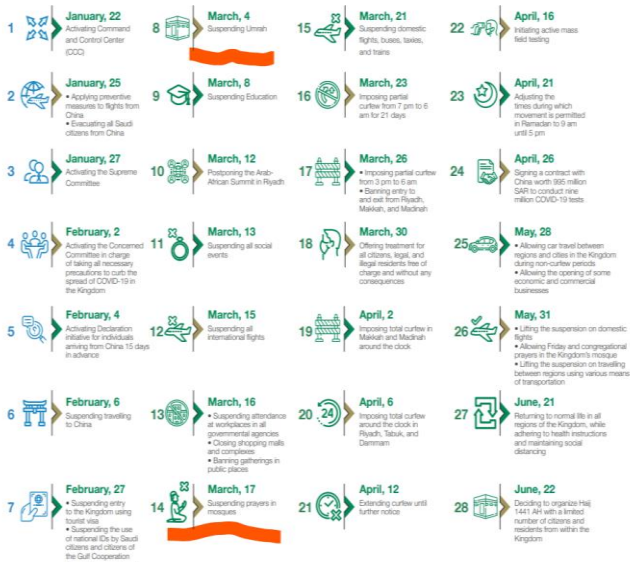
List of Entities - Led by Ministry of Health

Ministry of Finance
Ministry of Media
Weqaya (Saudi CDC)
Ministry of Interior
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Note: The Permanent Committee of Major Scholars and Senior Council of Scholars are not present

Extract 4: Types of Public health Measures & Decisions.

For More Decisions and Measures:



Decision Catalog (Sample)

Suspending Entry to Kingdom
Suspending attendance at workplaces
Suspending prayers in Mosques
Suspending Umrah
Imposing total curfew..

Note: The decision to **suspend Umrah** and **suspend praying in mosques** was in context of this **Committee**. The Permanent Committee of Major Scholars and Senior Council of Scholars were not part of this Committee.

Seven key Observations

Based on the above one can note 7 key observations:

1. **KSA adopted the WHO Standards and Guidelines for the COVID Response –**

Quote 1: “The Kingdom established guidelines in line with the standards adopted from the World Health Organization’s (WHO) document to deal with COVID-19, entitled «Operational Planning Guidelines to Support Country Preparedness and Response”

Reference: Official MOH Publication

Quote 2: “Saudi Arabia adopted the **World Health Organization’s guidelines on response to COVID-19**, which are based on nine pillars of public health preparedness and response.”

Reference:

<https://applications.emro.who.int/EMHJ/V27/11/1020-3397-2021-2711-1114-1124-eng.pdf>

2. A higher Committee (**National Emergency Response Committee**) was formed which was led by his excellency Minister of Health & had **many other participating Entities/Ministries**

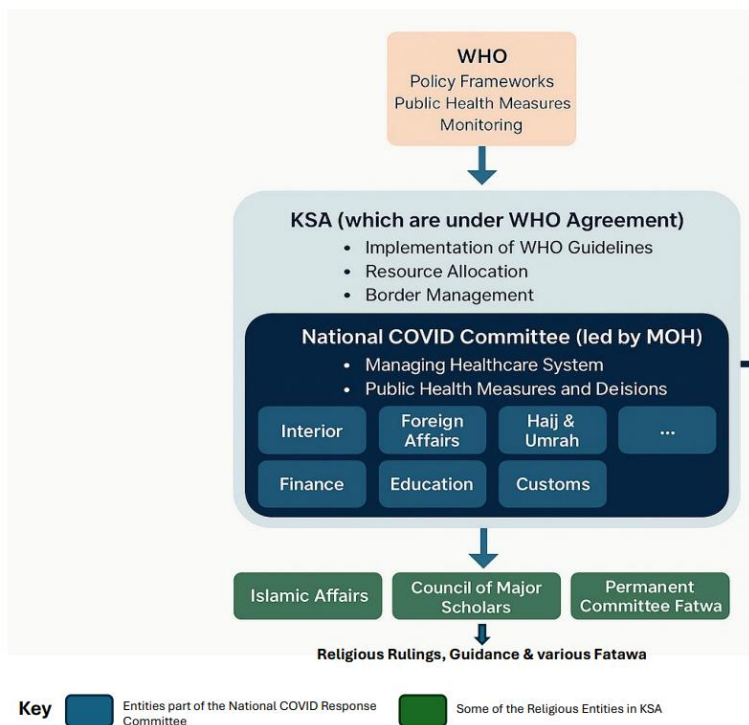
3. It was this **Committee**, which was responsible for **recommending** key policies / measures around **lockdown, social distancing** (this is very clearly shown in the Decision Catalog for this Committee)
4. Each of the **participating Entities/Ministries** had a **role** of assessing impact of these measures in their respective areas such as Energy, Transportation, Tourism, Education, Hajj etc. & ensure there is smooth functioning as much as possible (apart from other roles) – There is other material which expands on this for the relevant Entities.

Refer: Saudi Arabia's Ruthless Fight Against Coronavirus published on <https://www.undp.org/saudi-arabia/publications/saudi-arabias-ruthless-fight-against-coronavirus>

5. There was a clear, **well structured, top-down approach in the response management**. Clear directives flowed through a hierarchical chain of command with each Entities overseeing implementation in their respective domains. In fact, this approach garnered praises from several international organisations in terms of its handling and execution.
6. These participating entities (such as Tourism, Hajj, Education, etc.) **did not have the role or responsibility for medical or epidemiological aspects or assessment of medical interventions, diagnostics, vaccine assessments, public health measures, and similar areas.**

7. As per official KSA & WHO narrative, **The Council of Senior Scholars** or the **Permanent Committee of Major Scholars** (which are two separate official Entities in KSA) were not part of the **National Emergency Response Committee** for managing COVID in KSA.

KSA COVID Governance Model can be simplified in the below diagram (illustrative) (Note: This diagram is not present in the official narrative, but it is derived from it)



Role of Major Scholars

According to the official publications from the Ministry of Health (MOH) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the **Council of Senior Scholars was not part of the National COVID-19 Response Committee.**

This naturally raises a critical question:

What was the official role of the Major Scholars of KSA during this national and global crisis?

Summary of the Major Scholars' Role

Their role can be understood under the following key functions:

1. **Support for national leadership** in accordance with the commands of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.
2. **Issuance of religious rulings (fatwas)** based on decisions and policies already enacted by public health authorities & National COVID Committee.
3. **Providing spiritual guidance and encouragement** to the public on maintaining faith and composure during trials and calamities.

Additional Context for Point 1 - Support for Higher Authorities

The Major Scholars demonstrated public **support for decisions** taken by the leadership and government authorities, particularly those impacting religious rituals and mass gatherings.

Example:

The Council of Senior Scholars publicly endorsed the decision of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah to restrict Hajj participation during the pandemic.
[Source: SPA News](#)

Quote:

“Council of Senior Scholars voiced support for the Ministry of Hajj & Umrah’s decision to limit the Hajj for this year...”

Clarification:

- Note the language used—“voiced support”—indicates support, **not authorship of the decision** itself.
- Therefore, it is inaccurate and misleading to claim that “**Top Scholars** and Leaders closed down Umrah/Mosques.”
- Such exaggeration contradicts the official narrative and misrepresents their actual role. In addition it has other implications.

Additional Context for Point 2 - Issuance of Religious Rulings (Fatwas)

- The scholars **issued fatwas** aligned with public health guidelines already issued by the National COVID-19 Committee and relevant health bodies.
- These rulings covered matters such as communal prayers, mosque attendance, and preventive health measures.
- The **religious rulings were contingent** upon the existence of authoritative public health directives. Hence, in countries not adhering to such measures, the same fatwas would not automatically apply. This perspective is supported from various angles, including a response given by Shaykh Saalih Al-Fawzan حفظه الله regarding the issue of vaccination in Countries which don't mandate it.

Clarification on limits of the role of Major Scholars

- **Public health decisions and policy formulations** were not within the domain of the Major Scholars.
- These responsibilities belonged to entities such as:
 - Ministry of Health (MOH) & various Health Deputyships underneath it
 - Saudi Weqaya or Saudi CDC
 - Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA), among others.

This clear delineation of responsibility is **vital for accountability** and effective governance during complex situations.

Example:

If the MOH in KSA increased the required physical distancing from 1 to 2 meters, the adjustment would be a health policy update—not a religious ruling shift.

- Major Scholars may then issue guidance based on the updated measures, but they were not the **originators** of the change.

The Necessity of Accurate Representation of Major Scholars' Role

It is widely recognized in scientific circles that certain public health measures are subject to significant debate and frequently evolve due to a range of complex and dynamic factors (Source: <https://gh.bmj.com/content/8/3/e011182#sec-5>)



In such a context, it is vital to protect the honour and reputation of our Major Scholars by avoiding the attribution of responsibilities that lie outside their domain.

- **Accurate attribution of key Public Health decisions** to the appropriate Committee or Entity is essential to uphold the integrity of professional authorship and ensure alignment with **the official KSA narrative and actual factual reality.**
- By maintaining this distinction:
 - We adhere to the principles of justice and proper governance.
 - We avoid conflating KSA **religious authority** with **Public Health responsibility.**

- We preserve the dignity of our religious leadership & Major Scholars particularly in cases where certain public health policies may later be shown to have been detrimental or harmful.

These points are mentioned as they carry implications regarding the accusations being widely spread among common people, Students of Knowledge and Scholars about the stance of a well-known Student of Knowledge, Shaykh Abu Iyaad Amjad Rafiq – there are some serious accusations of which he is free from.

Some Questions to Ponder upon

Question: So who, then, is truly upholding the principles of professionalism and accuracy, whilst protecting the honour of our Major Scholars?

Viewpoint 1 - Is it the one who makes exaggerated claims—such as saying that "top scholars closed down the mosques"—thereby misattributing primary public health decisions to them? (Knowing well that Public Health directives are subject to debate and at times may even reverse course?)

Viewpoint 2 - Or is it the one who takes a balanced view and affirms that public *health authorities made decisions* based on their assessments, which were then communicated to other entities, including religious authorities, who subsequently issued appropriate religious rulings in alignment with those official decisions?

Question: Likewise, who is it that has truly exaggerated in this affair—going so far as to ostracize those individuals who held a valid and historically recognized view (widely acknowledged among the early Salaf, as well as scholars from the early, middle, and later generations) on the concept of contagion, namely, the absolute negation of contagion?

Question: When such individuals supported the view of negation of Contagion, with both medical and historical accounts, is it just or reasonable to label this as opposing the Major Scholars of KSA or to claim that they bear the blood of billions on their hands?

Question: Was it a crime to share the viewpoints of illustrious Salaf and Scholars such Abu Bakr radiallahu anhu, ‘Umar radiallahu anhu, al-Ṭahāwī , al-Ṭabarī , al-Qurtūbī, Ibn Ḥajar, Muqbil, al-Ḥakamī, and al-Luḥaydān—who held the view of the absolute negation of contagion? (which by default opposes the mainstream WHO / COVID transmission principle / theory)

Question: Does merely conveying their perspectives (and then bringing supporting evidence from Medical and Historical perspectives) amount to opposing the guidance of the Major Scholars of KSA?

Question: Did the Major Scholars themselves issue a ruling declaring it haram to share the views of earlier scholars who held this position of negation of Contagion?

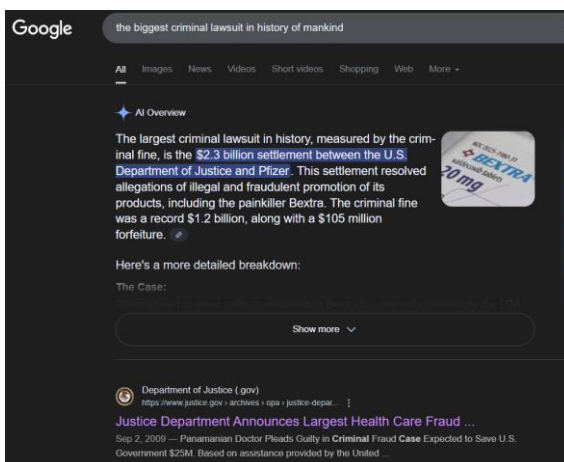
Question: If not, then how is it that some individuals—who constantly call for returning to the Major Scholars—are the very ones who have gone beyond them, causing the public to believe that such sharing is a transgression?

Additional Historical Observations

Public health measures such as social distancing, lockdowns, vaccines and mask mandates have long been subjects of Medical scholarly and scientific debate. These are not new issues introduced during the COVID-19 era, but areas of longstanding discussion and differing opinions.

Likewise the corruption within certain global health entities has been well-documented and investigated long before the COVID-19 era, with numerous lawsuits filed and billions in compensation paid once wrongdoing was legally established.

For those with less time at your hands, you may want to Google the following search term **“the biggest criminal lawsuit in history of mankind”**



The screenshot shows a Google search interface with the search term "the biggest criminal lawsuit in history of mankind". The search results include a featured snippet with the following text: "The largest criminal lawsuit in history, measured by the criminal fine, is the \$2.3 billion settlement between the U.S. Department of Justice and Pfizer. This settlement resolved allegations of illegal and fraudulent promotion of its products, including the painkiller Bextra. The criminal fine was a record \$1.2 billion, along with a \$105 million forfeiture." To the right of this text is a small image of a Bextra 20 mg tablet. Below the snippet is a "Show more" button. At the bottom, there is a link to a Department of Justice press release titled "Justice Department Announces Largest Health Care Fraud ..." dated Sep 2, 2009.

PRESS RELEASE

Justice Department Announces Largest Health Care Fraud Settlement in Its History

Wednesday, September 2, 2009

For Immediate Release
Office of Public Affairs

Pfizer to Pay \$2.3 Billion for Fraudulent Marketing

WASHINGTON - American pharmaceutical giant Pfizer Inc. and its subsidiary Pharmacia & Upjohn Company Inc. (hereinafter together "Pfizer") have agreed to pay \$2.3 billion, the largest health care fraud settlement in the history of the Department of Justice, to resolve criminal and civil liability arising from the illegal promotion of certain pharmaceutical products, the Justice Department announced today.

2.3 billion Dollars for Fraudulent behaviours

To put this amount into perspective—in a metropolitan city like Bangalore or Chennai, this money could fund the purchase of **20,000 apartments**, the construction of **5 metro stations**, and the **building of 50 hospitals**. That's the scale of impact such a sum could have. (Note: These are approximations but they give an idea of the scale of the amount)

In a nutshell it is a huge amount. And these Companies still survive....

If an individual sheds light on past instances of fraud and corruption, and offers practical guidance on how Muslims can protect themselves and their families in such situations, isn't that a valuable service to the Ummah? Helping people stay informed and cautious aligns with *the Islamic principle of safeguarding lives, trust, and well-being*

Shaykh Abu Iyyād had already addressed some of these topics well before the COVID-19 situation—dating back as early as 2010, although perhaps not in that detail. Even then, one could have argued that his views diverged from WHO guidance and public health frameworks, and such an observation would have been valid. At that time, Saudi Arabia was already aligned with WHO policies and international public health standards. Yet, no one came forward in 2010 to refute Abu Iyyād by claiming that he was opposing the Saudi authorities. Why?

If Abu Iyyād has simply maintained his principles, methodology, and viewpoints —then why is it only now that he is being attacked and accused of opposing the authorities and the Major Scholars? So his past criticisms of WHO and other related topics is deemed valid and reasonable? Wallahul Musta'aan

Conclusion

There are two distinct lenses through which one can view the role of the Major Scholars of KSA in relation to public health measures such as social distancing, masks, and lockdowns:

The First Viewpoint sees the Major Scholars as the **primary drivers or architects** of these policies—actively instituting and framing them and then enforcing it to the masses.

The second viewpoint holds that the Major Scholars issued religious rulings (fatāwā) based on decisions and policies **already enacted by the public health authorities and the National COVID Committee** (refer section on Extracts from official MOH Publication). In doing so, they advised the public to obey the authorities in matters that do not involve disobedience to Allah—thus remaining consistent with the Islamic principle of obedience to those in authority—without assuming authorship or direct ownership of the health policies themselves.

Over the course of this document, it is sufficiently established—*in shā' Allāh*—that the second viewpoint offers a more accurate representation of what took place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Likewise this viewpoint safeguards and protects the honour of our Major Scholars, Alhamdulillah

Engaging in scientific debate and discussion among medical experts and those qualified on matters such as social distancing, lockdowns, and mask mandates—particularly in countries (such as UK, USA) **where such discourse is legally permitted and not prohibited by the authorities**— then such discussion cannot justly be regarded as opposition to the Major Scholars in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia—*this is a far-fetched notion, Wallahul Musta'aan*

We ask Allah, Al-'Aleem (The All-Knowing) and Al-Hakeem (The Most Wise), to grant us a clear and truthful understanding of matters as they truly are, to guide us to what is right and pleasing to Him, and to protect us from confusion, misguidance, and falling into oppression.

May He safeguard us from falsely accusing others of what they are innocent of, and grant us the strength and *baseerah* (insight) to stand by and support those who are oppressed. Aameen

وبالله التوفيق.

Abu Bilaal Muzzammil Misbah
(11th June 2025), Riyadh, KSA