

The SAHUC Saga

Legitimacy

It has now come to light that, since its inception in 1995, the South African Hajj & Umrah Council (SAHUC) never had the legitimacy to act as a regulator or fulfil a facilitative role for Hajj. Despite this, it enjoyed proximity to South African government officials, impersonated diplomats, and claimed diplomatic status in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. SAHUC even signed protocol documents with Saudi officials concerning Hajj arrangements. Notably, these documents never referred to the organisation as “SAHUC” but instead used vague terms such as “the South African side,” “South African Hajj Mission,” or “South African Hajj delegation.” None of these terms were authorised or mandated by the South African government.

The Constitution (section 231) of South Africa explicitly requires parliamentary approval for any protocol entered into on behalf of the Republic. Yet, year after year, invitations were sent to the Consul General in Jeddah for the annual protocol-signing ceremony that determined South Africa’s Hajj quota. SAHUC officials used pilgrim funds to fly five delegates to these ceremonies, where they posed as diplomats and photographed themselves with Saudi officials — all while knowing full well that they lacked any legitimacy to represent South African Muslims.

Consequences of SAHUC’s Actions

The fallout from SAHUC’s illegitimate actions was far-reaching. Every pilgrim intending to perform Hajj was forced to comply with its ad hoc rules and regulations, falsely presented as directives from the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah. Prospective pilgrims had to pay a non-refundable deposit merely to join a waiting list. Accreditation and allocation were entirely at SAHUC’s discretion, forcing pilgrims to select a Hajj operator and finalise payments by fixed deadlines.

Without meeting these conditions, no Hajj visa would be issued. The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Pretoria granted SAHUC exclusive access to visas, effectively making it the sole gatekeeper for tens of thousands of South African Muslims waiting for their chance to perform Hajj.

How Was This Exposed?

Hajj Watch engaged a legal team to challenge SAHUC and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) for enabling this injustice. The matter was brought before the Gauteng Division of the High Court. Hajj Watch also alerted Saudi Hajj authorities that SAHUC held no legal mandate to represent South Africa.

Saudi authorities then required proof of mandate for SAHUC to remain on the NUSUK Masar (B2B) platform. DIRCO refused to provide any mandate. In desperation, SAHUC turned to the CRL Rights Commission, seeking legitimacy to act on behalf of the Muslim community. That attempt failed as only DIRCO can mandate SAHUC and not a chapter 9 institution. Today, SAHUC’s role as a self-styled regulator has collapsed, and for all intents and purposes, the organisation is defunct.

The Current State of Affairs

SAHUC’s continued attempts at relevance through public relations and social media campaigns cannot disguise its demise. Its recently published financial statements show significant assets, built up by charging pilgrims for services and accumulating surpluses over the years. These funds do not belong to SAHUC — they belong to the pilgrims.

The future of SAHUC is no longer for its membership to decide. Its members, by propping it up for decades, share responsibility for granting it a veneer of legitimacy. The time has come for decisive legal action: the Master of the High Court must appoint a liquidator to wind up SAHUC, manage its assets and liabilities, and ensure that surplus funds are returned according to its constitution. For Muslim public to request the Master of the High court for this action is of utmost importance.

Conclusion

This case underscores the importance of lawful advocacy in curbing unaccountable and autocratic bodies within the Muslim community. Organisations that claim to represent Muslim interests must be held to the highest standards of accountability. The immediate priority is to return registration fees and while simultaneously requesting the winding up of SAHUC.

Under no circumstances should SAHUC itself decide how and when these funds are returned. That would be like asking the arsonists to write the fire report.