The sighting of the moon and the start of fasting

Q: According to reliable data concerning the birth of the new moon for Ramadan and Shawwal this year, it was clear that the new moon could not have been sighted anywhere in the Middle East on the evening of Dec. 8. Nor the new moon of Shawwal could have been sighted on the evening of Jan. 6. However, it was announced in many Arab countries that Ramadan started on Dec. 9 based on sighting the moon the previous night, and it ended in Saudi Arabia and other countries on Jan. 7 based on eye sighting. May I ask how is this possible and why are not astronomical data taken into consideration in these matters?

A. A. Maenmai
Pakistan

The first and most valid is that it is wrong to ignore completely the information gained through astronomical calculation in favor of sighting with the naked eye. Indeed, the two methods can easily be employed together, without fear of contradiction, particularly when we take into consideration what scholars like As-Sukki have said. What the authorities concerned explain is how to determine the beginning and end of Ramadan. The Hadith specifies the condition of the Muslim community at the time of the Prophet. It does not make the state of being unlettered a permanent one which the Muslims must always maintain. In fact Islam encourages learning and makes it a duty of the Muslim community to acquire knowledge in every field. Therefore, when the community is no longer unlettered, it should return to the two areas which help it in its affairs, writing and arithmetic. When we know that astronomical calculation provides us with certain knowledge, it is not right from the Islamic point of view to ignore it in favor of the method which gives us only assumed knowledge.

Sheikh Qardawi: Friday is the completion of the holy month of Ramadaan.

Friday, Jan 7th is the 30th day of the holy month of Ramadaan. Muslims in countries like Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Qatar, UAE, and others should start Eid on Friday instead of fasting a day later.

Previous astronomical calculations have confirmed without a doubt that sighting the crescent on Thursday was impossible. Consequently, if the calculations showed there is no Moon to be seen, people should not be asked to fetch it, and no testimony of sighting it should be accepted.

Sheik Qardawi has manifested that if a country should announce a day as the first of Ramada or Shawwal, then it is held responsible. And the citizens of that country must oblige to that. Because there shouldn't be two parties in the same country, one is fasting, the other is feasting. If it's hard or impossible for the whole nation to meet on the same feasting day, then it's not hard for the people of one country to do so.

Finally Sheikh Qardawi stated* He who believes in the credibility of the astronomical calculations and feasted on Friday, should fast a day instead of it*.

Illustration 2: Sheikh Yusuf AlQaradawi’s Fatwa: Those who followed Saudi announcement for Eid 1420H should make up one missed fast.
In the name of Allaah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Arab Union of Astronomy & Social Sciences (AUASS) on Saudi decision of EidUlAdha 1420H: Seeing the crescent last Thursday was impossible


A statement made by the AUASS (The Arab Union for Astronomy & Space Sciences) has strictly exiled the possibility of seeing the Shawwal crescent on Thursday, Jan 6th. "It was only possible to see it on Friday or Saturday", stated the AUASS. The statement made it clear that the countries in which Friday was the first day of the Eid, were obviously wrong. "It boldly contradicts with the simplest scientific facts". AUASS has shown it’s great regret and marveling over the fragmented beginnings of the Holy months. Adding that the Islamic world had celebrated the Eid in four different days all over the Globe. "Nigeria has announced Thursday, Jan 6th to be the first day of the Fitter feast, whereas Saudi Arabia and other countries declared it on Friday, Jan 7th. Most of the rest of the Islamic world made Saturday, Jan 8th their first Eid day, and some left it till Sun, Jan 9th".

"As for the crescent of Shawwal", adds AUASS. "The geocentric conjunction occurred on Thursday at 18:14 UT. The conjunction is the same meaning of the new moon, or the wane phase. It happens when the moon comes between the Earth and the Sun, that we only see the dark side of the moon. The crescent starts to appear after 12-20 hours of the conjunction".

"If we want to sight a crescent after the sunset, then the conjunction should have occurred 12-20 hours earlier than the sunset". Said the statement. It also emphasized that the Sun went down in Mecca at 17:44 Saudi time on Thursday Jan 6th. Whereas the conjunction occurred at 21:14 Saudi time of that day (UT+3). Which means that the sighting of the crescent from Saudi Arabia not only not possible on Thursday, but also completely impossible.

AUASS also said that the sighting of the crescent from all of the Islamic countries was impossible on Thursday Jan 6th. Adding: "The sighting of the crescent wasn't that easy even on Friday. For the astronomical calculations have shown that the crescent won't be seen after the sunset on Friday from Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, and most of Iran. Where it was possible to see it throw a telescopes in parts of Iran, the gulf countries, Iraq, Yemen, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Algeria. Where in Mauritania, Morocco, and all the rest of the western countries you may get a clear eye sighting of the crescent on that day".

"Assuming the actual sighting of the crescent, Saturday, Jan 8th should be the first day of the Eid in the countries that were able to see it, and to be on Sunday in the countries that were able to see the crescent on Saturday only".

The statement of AUASS declared that one announcement - based on no scientific facts - of one country, made millions of Muslims skip a day of fasting and to start Eid on Friday. Stating: "There are some countries where they trust the calculations of their astronomers, and their credibility, refused to accept such an announcement. Which accepting it shows the ignorance of those who believed it".

Concluding, AUASS stated: "The first country able to sight the crescent was Iran, and through a telescope only. Iranian observers couldn't see it by naked eyes. And we wonder! How did he who ever claimed that he saw the crescent - see it on Thursday, 24 hours prior to the first sighting with the telescope?"

Finally, AUASS saluted the governors of the countries that announce Saturday or Sunday to be the first of the Eid.

Illustration 3: Arab Union of Astronomy & Social Sciences (AUASS) on error in Saudi decision of EidUlAdha 1420H date.
Sighting of Hilaal in a country does not mean that all other countries have to follow.

Question: Appearance of Ramadaan Hilaal or Shawwal Hilaal differs between Muslim countries. So should the Muslims fast if the Hilaal appears in one of those countries?

Answer: The scholars have difference of opinion regarding the issue of Hilaal. Some of them view that if Ramadaan Hilaal appears in a place per Islamic rules, so all Muslims should start fasting. And if Shawwal Hilaal appears, all Muslims should break fast.

And this is famous in the Fiqh of Imam Ahmad. And from this e.g. if we see the Hilaal in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, then it is incumbent on all Muslims in all countries to follow this sighting for fasting in case of Ramadaan and for breaking the fast in case of Shawwal. And it was based on an open statement of Allah (SWT) in the Qur'an: Fa man shahida minkum ash-shahr fal yasumh. and the open statement of the Hadith from our Prophet (PBUH):): if you saw it fast, and if you saw it, break the fast.

And some scholars who say that it is not necessary to fast from the appearance of Ramadaan Hilaal, nor to break fast in Shawwail, except for the one who saw the Hilaal or agreed on the sighting in the Matale of Hilaal, because Matale of Hilaal differs, as agreed by people who know. So if there are any differences (of Matale), each country must follow their own sighting. If a country agrees in the Matale of Hilaal, it follows, otherwise not.

And this is what the Sheikhul Islam Ibn Taimiyyah RHA chose. And he based this on the word of Allah (SWT): Fa man shahida minkum ash-shahr fal yasumh. and the open statement of the Hadith from the Prophet (PBUH):): if you saw it fast, and if you saw it, break the fast. i.e. by the same daleel / method, which was used by the ones who obligate (all to follow one sighting), but Ibn Taimiyyah who bases on the same Ayah and Hadith, differs (in his conclusions). If the ruling was to follow the witness and the sighter, the ones who did not witness or saw it, the ruling will not be obligated on them. And if the Matale (sighting) differs, so the ruling of Hilaal cannot be generalized (for them).

And this is for sure a strong argument to use, based on proof (daleel) and strengthened by viewpoint and qiyas (analogy).

AlShaykh Ibn Othaimeen
Chapter: Rules of starting and ending a month and the sighting of Hilaal
Book: Fatawa Islamiyah: AbdulAziz Bin Baaz, Muhammad Bin Saleh Bin Othaimeen, Abdullah Bin AbdurRahmaan AlJibreen; Darul Watan Publishers

Illustration 4: Sheikh AlOthaimeen (RH) supports Ikhtilaaf AlMatale (Local Sighting); also says Sheikh Ibn Taimiya supported Ikhtilaaf AlMatale.
Bismillah IrRahmaan IrRaheem

Respected Sheikh Muhammad bin Saleh AlOthaimeen
May Allaah protect you.

As Salaamu Alaykum w.r. w.b.

We have observed the Fatwa from your respected self, in the book "Fatwa Islamiya" relating that the sighting of Hilaal in one country does not obligate all other countries to abide by (it's date). Is this also applicable to Hilaal sighting for EidUlAdha (month of DhulHijja)?

Please benefit us (explain to us). May Allaah (SWT) reward you.

Jazakum Allahu Khayr AlJaza

Bismillah IrRahmaan IrRaheem

Wa Alaykum As Salaam w.r. w.b.

For Hilaal the Matale (sighting) are different from one place to other – for Ramadaan as well as other months. The same rule for Hilaal applies for all the months. However I view that the people should agree on one thing, and follow the resolution of the Ameer of the Islamic society in their non-Muslim countries. Since this matter is wide (multiple views) Insha’Allaah. i.e. some scholars say: once the sighting of Hilaal is confirmed in any one Islamic country or state, it obligates all Muslims in all Islamic states to abide by (its date).

This is written by Muhammad bin Saleh AlOthaimeen on 15/02/1421H

Bismillah IrRahmaan IrRaheem

Saudi Aalim Asks Muslims in N. America NOT to pray Eid on Day after Arafah

(Famous Saudi Aalim and Faqih, Sheikh Mohammad Ibn Salih Al-Uthaimeen tells Muslims about the correct date of Eid al-Adha in N. America to be on 10th Zul-Hijja of North America, and not the day-after Arafah in Makkah, as some claim.)

From: Abdulrahman bin Abdallah Al-khalidy (Ithaca, NY)

Al Hamdulillah wa salatu wa salamu ala rasulillah,

I was troubled when I read the e-mails regarding the discrepancies in deciding the first day of Dhil-Hijjah which would mean that we will have to accommodate two separate dates for the Day of Arafah and the Eid. I called Sheikh Mohammad bin Uthaymeen and asked him about this particular situation and his position has relieved me; wal Hamdulillah.

Q: Should we abide by the local sighting in determining the Eid-al-Adha or should we follow the pilgrims’ schedule, knowing that North America sighting of crescent may come a day before Saudi Arabia's sighting?

A: "You should abide by the city you're living in."

Q: This means that we will fast the 9th of Zul-Hijja of North America and pray Eid on 10th Zul-Hijja of North America!

A: "Yes, and this is what you should do without any (Haraj) or mental anxiety."

Any questions regarding this conversation? Contact oa12@cornell.edu

Wish you good luck in fulfilling the Ibadah, fasting on the 9th Zul-hijja based on your area moonsighting and celebrating Eid-al-Adha on 10th Zul-hijja. Those who do it this way, they would have followed the Sunnah of the Prophet. May Allah bless you all.

WalHamdulillahi RabbiAlAmeen


Illustration 5: Sheikh AlOthaimeen (RH) supports Ikhtilaaf AlMatale (Local Sighting) for all 12 months including DhulHijja (EidUIAdha).
In the name of Allaah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful
Sheikh Muhammad bin Saleh AlOthaimeen Fatwa on Eclipse & Dates

The question:- AsSalaamu Alaykum WaRahmatullahi WaBarakaatuhu. If the solar eclipse happens fully or partially after the sunset in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia and this eclipse was witnessed in the region west of the kingdom, what is the ruling of the following day for this country in which the solar eclipse happened? Is this the completion of the 30th day of the month? If the following month started on that day through calculation or sighting of Hilaal, what is the ruling?

Presenter: Abdul Aziz Sultan Almar'esh, General Manager responsible for watching Hilaal at the department of Astronomical research at King Abdul Aziz City for Science & Technology.

BismillahirRahmaanirRaheem Wa Alaykum AsSalaamu WaRahmatullahi WaBarakaatuhu.

If an eclipse takes place after sunset in any place on earth, it becomes impossible to have a new month the next day. This is due to the fact that scholars and experts are of the same opinion that the physical reason for the eclipse is the presence of the moon between the sun and the earth. It is also a common fact to the scholars and the public that a new month would not start without the sighting of Hilaal, some time after sunset.

If that is the case, then a new month would not possible in the same night where eclipse has taken place after sunset. This is impossible based on the norms that the Almighty Allah set for the rotation of the sun and the moon.

The Almighty Allah stated in the Glorious Qur'an, (Sura Al-An'am 6:96): He makes the night for rest and tranquility, and the sun and moon for the reckoning (of time): Such is the judgment and ordering of (Him), the Exalted in Power, the Omniscent.

And (in Sura Ya-Seen 36:38-40): And the sun runs his course for a period determined for him: that is the decree of (Him), the Exalted in Might, the All-Knowing. And the Moon:- We have measured for her mansions (to traverse) till she returns like the old (and withered) lower part of a date-stalk. It is not permitted to the Sun to catch up the Moon, nor can the Night outstrip the Day: Each (just) swims along in (its own) orbit (according to Law).

And (in Sura AshShams: 91:1-2): By the Sun and his (glorious) splendor; By the Moon as she follows him;

This verse indicates that the moon in the night of the Hilaal, follows the sun. Therefore, if the moon follows the sun, it is consequently coming later than the sun and not possible for it (e.g. the moon) to be in the middle between the sun and the earth. So how would it jump in order for it to be between (the sun) and the earth?

Furthermore, a person who observes the movement of the sun and the moon, notices that the moon always lags the sun in its movement. Thus, you can see the moon in the first night of the month- for example the moon would be two or three meters away from the sun. The second night, the moon would move further away from the sun. The third night, the moon would still get further and further, and so on until the middle of the month. At that time, the moon would be on the opposite side of the horizon from the sun. Thus between them would be like between the East and West.

Therefore, if a person claims that the month began in the same night when an eclipse took place after sunset, is like a person who claims that the moon would be in a full-moon position in the same night when it is born. Or, like the person who claims that the sun would rise before dawn, or like a baby will show up before he gets out of the womb of his mother. All these things are impossible according to the rules & behavior that the Almighty Allah has ordained for this splendid universe, in its precise system.

As for the belief in the power of the Almighty Allah, there is no doubt that the Almighty Allah is Capable to do anything. And He is also capable to combine the two moons, and to separate them and to dim them or to make them shining in their light at any time. As He stated in the Glorious Qur'an. (Sura Al-Qiyama 75:7-10): At length, when the sight is dazed, And the moon is buried in darkness. And the sun and moon are joined together,- That Day will Man say: "Where is the refuge?"

But the rules that the Almighty Allah laid down concerning the sun and the moon of this world are fixed, and do not change, except in case of a miracle for a Prophet or in the honor of a Wali (closely befriended man to the Almighty Allah). This is written by Muhammad AsSaleh AlOthaimeen 30/1/1412H.

Illustration 6: Sheikh AlOthaimeen (RH)'s Fatwa on Solar Eclipse and Hilaal dates.
Illustration 7: The visible Hilaal is usually a day after the invisible astronomical new moon birth (when sun, moon and earth are in a straight line).

Illustration 8: MoonCalc from http://www.ummah.net/illum/mooncalc.html Areas outside the “Lunar Date Line” curve see hilaal next day.