

وفاق العلماء WIFAQULULAMA

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Assalamuallikum waRahmatullahi wabaraktuh

ICOP CONFERENCE REPORT - HELD IN ABU DHABI ON 30th MAY TO 1ST JUNE 2010

There was a three day conference on the issue of Moonsighting and Salah times organised by ICOP in Abu Dhabi. Renowned Ulama and Astronomers from around the world attended this conference. Upon finding out that there was going to be strong Saudi Arabian delegation present, which would include Ulama and Astronomers from the Saudi Supreme court, who are the Saudi Hilal decision makers we felt it appropriate that the Wifaq ul Ulama should send some representatives. Since invitation to the conference had already been received, Members of the Wifaq ul Ulama; Moulana Muhammad Shoyaib Nurgat, Sheikh Sulaiman Ghani and Brothers Qamar Uddin and Abdul Aziz Raje responded to the invitation and attended the conference. Below is a brief report presented by them:

Alhamdulillah with the intention of gaining a better understanding of the Hilal issue, we undertook this journey to Abu Dhabi. We had the desire in our minds as well that Insha Allah maybe if the Saudi delegation were made to understand the problems the Muslims in UK were facing due to their, many a times impossible decisions, they could rethink their policy on Moonsighting, and rectify the mistakes they were making. As the pro Saudi groups in this country are not listening, maybe we had a better chance with meeting the real decision makers. I have to say that meeting and talking to the Ulama from the Saudi Supreme Court was easier than meeting the pro Saudi groups here in the UK! More details about this meeting is detailed later on in this report.

The first day of the conference was dedicated to the issue of Moonsighting, different aspects of this important issue was discussed, the issue of using different telescopes for sighting the Hilal was part of the discussion as was the issue of CCD imaging. This was important for us to hear as it came from Martin Elsaesser from Germany, who explained this whole process. From what we heard it became clear to us that that this CCD Imaging is not the same as sighting the Hilal as Moulana Miftahi from Hizb ul Ulama understood and claimed in one of his newsletters. This technology involves the use of digital cameras and computers to create an image of the Hilal existent on the horizon, but what needs to be very clear is that this is not the same as sighting, and this is showing something beyond the capabilities of the naked eye. Wifaq ul Ulama despite its support for use of technology would never use such technology for determining months as we only support determining the months through actual sighting, if this is our stance, how can a group who claims to follow the 'UMMI' Hadith, who rejects the use of Astronomy even as a guide ever use this method to determine a month? It is very unfortunate that they used this technology to try to convince people that impossible sighting could be made through CCD imaging.

Brother Qamaruddin, a scientist from York, whom we noticed was a very important and accepted member of the ICOP community was also called upon to explain his innovative method in sharing the experience of Hilal sighting with others on the internet. (live Webcast). I have to say that we are fortunate to have present amongst us here in the UK, such dedicated people who have an in depth knowledge of Astronomy and at the same time is well versed in Masail of our Holy Shariah. Such people should be valued and utilised for our benefit.

What clearly comes to mind is the confirmation by the Moroccan delegation of their efforts and insistence of commencing each month only after sighting is confirmed by the naked eye. The issue of rejecting testimonies of impossible sighting was also discussed, and as one will see from the resolutions agreed it seems that sometime in the near future the acceptance of such impossible sightings will become a thing of the past, Insha Allah.

The second day was dedicated to discussions on Salah times. The speakers presented scientific evidences for Fajar/Isha times during normal periods at -18 degrees, many of the researchers had brought with them photographs of Subh Kazib and Subh Sadiq, which we saw for the first time. What we concluded was that some of these research teams from Jordan and Syria had spent years on their research. And it became quite evident that the Islamic World has adopted the 18 Degrees or thereabouts meaning 17.5 or 19 degrees for Fajar/Isha times.

The importance of carrying out the observations (Mushahadah) in places which are free from artificial light was also discussed. Salah times in higher latitude countries was also discussed, but on this issue we felt that our own specialist from UK had the final say. Moulana Yaqub Qasmi Saheb pointed out the importance of leaving this issue to the expert Ulama residing in such countries.

The third day was again dedicated to the importance of the knowledge of Astronomy, this knowledge was acquired by the early Muslims, the West was very far behind in this knowledge. It was important to reintroduce this knowledge as a subject in curriculums in schools and colleges throughout the Muslim World. Malaysia has already introduced it and are very much advanced.

This was the day that we were very fortunate to meet Shaikh Abdullah Mune'a of the Saudi Royal Court and Shaikh Abdul Aziz Hamead of the Saudi Supreme Court in separate meetings. The first meeting was with Shaikh Abdullah Mune'a, a letter from the Batley Moonsighting committee was read out to him by Sheikh Sulaiman Ghani from Wifaq Ul Ulama, and a few questions were also asked, we were assured that the request we made would be presented to those in charge in Saudi Arabia. This was followed by a meeting with Shaikh Abdul Aziz Hamead of the Saudi Supreme Court, again a few questions were asked and request were made. We did get to know from the honourable Sheikh that only the months of Ibaadat were announced by the supreme court of which he was a member. So these pro Saudi groups of the UK announcing the months claiming that the News is from Saudi Supreme court, beggars belief. So the reality is that the Umm ul Qura calendar reigns after all in the remaining months. For the Saudi's this is not a problem, as for them the 15th of Sha'baan holds no significance whatsoever, for us it is a problem as we hold it to be a special night, so to follow a predetermined Ummul Qura calendar could lead to our dedication in Ibadah on the wrong night.

A very positive point coming out of the conference is the knowledge that Nigeria has started actual sightings from this year, their months are declared upon actual sighting, and this will be the official government announcement from this year.

Oman has followed a strict calendar based on sighting only, The Wifaq ul Ulama had a meeting with the official Omani government delegation, we were very pleased to hear about the way they go about the sighting issue and the way they go about interviewing claimants who claim they have sighted the Hilal. A similar process to the Asian subcontinent exist there, We have formed a special relationship with them through which we will be able to share Hilal information with them.

We are aware of private meetings that took place with the Saudi delegation, the information remains private, but what we can safely say is that all these meetings were fruitful and Insha Allah a change for the good should take place in the not very distant future. The Pro Saudi groups in this country should have made an effort to attend, as it would have opened up their hearts and mind to this important brand of knowledge and when the Saudi's have accepted certain aspects of Astronomy, why are the people claiming to follow Saudi held back? This was an ideal opportunity to understand the difference between Astronomy and Astrology.

Any how we rate this conference as a success Insha Allah, we pray to Almighty Allah that he accepts our journey, accepts the conference, and make the resolutions passed a source of unity for the Ummah, unity based on what is right and correct. Aameen.

Below is the Letter presented (translated in English) and ICOP conference recommendation which were accepted by all participants:

مجلس رؤية هلال بانثلي
BATLEY MOON SIGHTING COMMITTEE

batleymisc@ymail.com

Praise be to God alone, and blessings and peace be upon the Prophet:

Respected Chairman of the Supreme Court, Abdur-Rahman Al-Kolayyeh.

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

We ask Allah ﷻ that you receive this message from your brothers in England and you are in the best condition and we ask God Almighty to bless your good efforts to establish religion and care towards what is good and righteous for the Muslims within the Kingdom and abroad.

The Batley Moon Sighting Committee is a local committee of the city of Batley in the United Kingdom consisting of twenty-five Ulamaa and is a branch of the Association of Islamic scholars which consists of one hundred and twenty-five Ulamaa. We are responsible for informing with regards the beginning of the Islamic month in our city of Batley which consists of about five thousand Muslims. As it is known that the sighting of the Hilaal crescent is practically impossible during some months of the year in UK, so we have no other option but to rely on sources outside the United Kingdom Including Saudi Arabia, however, sometimes we get a testimony to the news of moon sighting from Saudi Arabia after the birth of the moon in three or four hours when they can not see it in the other neighbouring countries west of Saudi Arabia. This has led to divisions of Muslims in our small society to the extent that members of the same family celebrate Eid on different days.

Therefore, we request that you re-examine the methods of accepting the testimony of sighting in Saudi Arabia to overcome the problems mentioned above. We expect it will lead to greater unity of Muslims in Ramadan and Eid events إن شاء الله.

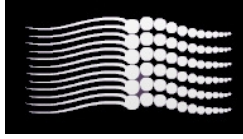
May Allah ﷻ accept your efforts and benefit the nation, Spread good at your hands and ask Allah ﷻ that this effort is in our good deeds.

Batley Moon sighting Committee
13 Jumaadal Ukhraa 1431
28th May 2010



Al-Hikmah Centre, 28 Track Road, Batley, W.
Yorkshire, WF17 7AA

By the Name of Allah



CDR



جمعية الإمارات للفلك



ICOP

Recommendations of the Second Emirates Astronomy Conference

Under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mansour Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs, the Emirates Astronomical Society (EAS), the Islamic Crescents' Observation Project (ICOP), and the Center for Documentation and Research (CDR) organized the second Emirates Astronomy Conference titled "The Role of Astronomy in the Islamic Society: Applications in Islam, Education, and Environment" in Abu Dhabi from May 30 to June 1, 2010 CE (16-18 Jumadal Al-Akhera 1431 AH). The conference was attended by dozens of scholars and experts and over 150 participants from 26 countries (Algeria, Belgium, Brunei, Egypt, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, UAE, and USA).

The participants hailed the high level of the conference and applauded the participation of the scholars (of Astronomy Fiqh, and Jurisprudence) from the Muslim world and from the West. The conference participants discussed and adopted the following recommendations:

1. Organize the third conference on the same theme in two years, and workshops between astronomers and jurists/fuqaha to continue the progress that has been made on the issues under consideration.
2. Continue the discussions on the Islamic calendar with the aim of achieving greater agreement and reaching a formulation that is both acceptable to all and applicable as widely as possible, and submit to the relevant institutions and authorities what has been produced.
3. Request the relevant authorities not to call for attempting to observe the crescent on the 29th of the Islamic month if astronomical calculations show that the moon has not reached conjunction or has set before the sun.
4. Reject the testimonies of crescent which the established astronomical institutions reject definitively, even if they are claimed after conjunction and with the moon setting after the sun.
5. Include astronomers who have expertise in crescent visibility in the official committees that determine the beginning of Hejric months.
6. Continue and strengthen the studies of prayer times at high latitudes and publicize these studies for the benefit of Muslims of those areas in particular.
7. Collaborate with educational institutions in the aim of introducing chapters and modules on astronomy applied to Islamic issues in the curricula.
8. Conduct a wide survey to assess the level of astronomical knowledge in Muslim societies at large (schools, clubs, etc.) and work on remedying any deficiencies that will be uncovered.
9. Encourage and collaborate with the media in introducing regular newspaper and magazine columns and TV programs on Astronomy in place of Astrology, especially what relates directly to Islamic needs.
10. Strengthen the relations between the organizing parties of the conference and the astronomical, scientific, and official institutions of the Arab and Muslim world(s).
11. Publish the proceedings book with high scientific standards at the earliest and distribute to libraries so as to make it a prime reference on the subject for all researchers.
12. Publish a summary article about the conference in newspapers and magazines.
13. Post the main recommendations and results of this first conference on ICOP's website and on partner websites.
14. Send a letter of grateful thanks and regards to His Highness Sheikh Mansour Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs, for his kind sponsoring of this conference and related activities.

Report supplied by ICOP on 1 June 2010 CE 18 Jumadal Al-Akhera 1431 AH

Recommendations Related to the Islamic Crescents' Observation Project (ICOP)

On the other hand, the participants discussed ICOP's future and adopted the following recommendations:-

- 1. Set up an Executive Committee with clear prerogatives.**
- 2. Establish new committees in ICOP, with a specific mandate and detailed agenda for each committee:**
 - a. Scientific committee.**
 - b. Educational committee.**
 - c. Media committee.**
 - d. (Ad-hoc) Committee to finalize the new general objectives and future program of ICOP.**
- 3. Publish an annual report for ICOP, with report sections for each committee.**
- 4. Publish an annual report on the "State of Astronomy in the Muslim World", with figures and information to be published in the media.**
- 5. Develop the ICOP website to be pluri-lingual, particularly in the Arabic language.**
- 6. Strengthen the scientific and educational activities of the project.**
- 7. Strive to reach wider audiences, especially those with influence within society: officials, religious authorities, educators.**
- 8. Organize local and regional workshops to train amateurs, educators and students on astronomical applications in Islam (crescent sighting, calendars, prayer times, Qiblah Direction).**
- 9. Strengthen media activity and outreach on astronomical applications in Islam.**
- 10. Recommend and encourage crescent sightings by groups and include astronomers whenever possible in order to reduce false crescent sightings.**
- 11. Raise the knowledge content (articles, etc.) of the ICOP website so as to make it the prime reference on the subject for researchers everywhere.**

To view the Report supplied by ICOP, please go to <http://www.icoproject.org/conf2.html>