

Fatawa on errors in following Saudi moon sighting in Britain

Hazrat Maulana Mufti Rasheed Ahmed Ludhyanwi (RA)

...It is not known that the number of people sighting the moon in Saudia is of satisfactory quantity. The decision of the Saudi government is not only against the established principles of the Hanafi Fiqh, it is also against common sense therefore it is not applicable to Pakistan. The sighting of a large body is a condition within the Hanafi Fiqh when the horizon is clear however the Saudi government often decides Ramadhan on a single witness and Eid and Dhul-Hijjah on a minimum of two witnesses...(Ahsanul-Fatawa, Volume4/Page 417)

Hazrat Maulana Mufti Rasheed Ahmed Ludhyanwi (RA) subsequently wrote a letter to the responsible officials in the Saudi government regarding this matter and was not satisfied with the reply. He (RA) wrote, "I had clearly stated my reasons for claiming that your criteria for moon sighting are against the obvious; however I have not received a reply. The reasons quoted previously are as follows:

1. It is unusual in case of clear horizons for just a few people in the entire country to sight the crescent
2. General sighting is not even observed on the 2nd day of sighting i.e. masses are unable to see the moon even on the 2nd day)
3. Full moon should be observed on the 14th or the 15th, however according to your sighting it is usually viewed on the 16th or the 17th
4. It is impossible to sight the crescent on the day (or even a day after) when the moon is sighted in the east at dawn since the moon sets before the sunset in those days. However the Saudi government announces moon sighting sometimes on the very same day when the moon is sighted in the east at dawn
5. Moon is not sighted elsewhere after the sighting in Saudia even in the west of Saudi Arabia
6. The first day of the moon (birth) is been often declared the first of the Islamic month, which is illogical because it would mean that the moon can be sighted before its birth (Ahsanul-Fatawa, Volume4/Page 418)

Darul-uloom Deoband:

Question: You will be well aware of the controversies regarding the sighting of the moon here in the UK. For a period of time our respected scholars and the representatives of the esteemed institute of Deoband followed the authentic sightings of Morrocco considering it as a nearby country, which is in accordance with the Shariah and the Hanafi school of thought.

The only setback was that occasionally the news of sighting the moon was delayed to an extent that on one occasion we fasted on not hearing any news about the moon being sighted, only to find out later on that day that it was

sighted, therefore the fast was broken and Eid celebrated.

The individuals who were responsible for the research of the moon sighting should have calmed down the situation and rebuilt confidence in the general community, but instead, they went running around to and fro, to Darul Iftaa's around the globe to get a fatwa issued so that following Saudi's sightings would be made permissible. They published such fatwa extensively creating an atmosphere that following Saudi's sighting was the only permissible way and that it was wrong to follow Morocco. When in reality the outcome of these fatwas was to grant some flexibility in times of difficulty. Granting flexibility under temporary circumstances and issuing verdicts for permanent situations are separate matters altogether.

This all lead to a confusion resulting with a group of people trying to instigates Saudi's observations and contrary to this, some scholars eager to follow the righteous path, who were never satisfied with the Saudi observations. As time passed Saudi sightings were proved wrong on many occasions.

If the Saudi observations had been correct, there would not have been any controversy at all. But time and time again Saudi has proved itself incorrect. The evidence is that on many occasions Saudi announces the sighing of moon, when not a single person sights the moon in any part of Asia or Africa where the horizon is mostly clear as well. What's more is that there is no sighting of the moon in any part of America, Canada or West Indies where the sun sets eight hours after Saudi; and the crescent has grown much bigger.

For instance, this Shawwal 1423H on Wednesday evening Saudi made an announcement for Eid and a large number of Muslims here in the U.K. celebrated Eid on the following day whereas Muslims were fasting America, Canada, Panama, and Barbados and they celebrated Eid on Friday. This episode repeats itself nearly every year.

The purpose of putting this in writing is so that we ponder over the problems and dilemmas that are arising as a result of these premature Saudi announcements and to rectify the situation (if possible).

The following problems will arise whenever Saudi will make a premature announcement:

1. Keeping a fast of Ramadhan in Sha'ban, which contradicts the Hadeeth as well as misleads people into thinking that it is a fast of Ramadhan when in reality it is not
2. Changing a day or two of Sha'ban into Ramadhan, which contradicts the verse of Qur'an in which the people of the days of ignorance were prohibited from changing the names of the months. They used to change the name of the month according to their likings.
3. Celebrating Eid in Ramadhan
4. Omitting a fast of Ramadhan, when all are equally compulsory
5. Changing Ramdhan into Shawwal, which is forbidden as above
6. Many pious people start the six fasts of Shawwal straight after Eid and under

such circumstances they would be fasting on the day of Eid which is in complete contradiction with the Hadeeth

7. It is understood from many books of Fiqh that any form of Ibaadah is not acceptable before the due time, but is accepted if it is performed later than schedule time due to any valid excuse and the responsibility of fulfilling that Ibaadah is discharged. For example praying Zuhr Salaah 2 minutes before Zawal will not be accepted under any circumstances at all. But if it was prayed late close to Asar time, it would be accepted and no sin committed if there was a valid excuse. Similarly, Qurbani can be made on the eleventh or twelfth if it is not made on the tenth but under no circumstances can it be made on the ninth of Zil-Hijjah. It is the same command for fasting and Eid. If fast or Eid is celebrated before time it will not be accepted, but if for any reason there is a delay because the sighting of the moon cannot be clarified then this Ibaadah will be accepted and the responsibility discharged

8. How is it possible that when-ever Saudi makes a hasty announcement of the moon sighting, it is not visible in Asia, Africa, or any other western countries even though they have a clear horizon. How can it be possible that the moon is sighted at sunset time in Saudi and 8 hours later it cannot be seen in America, Canada or the West Indies? The problem has occurred many times as well as this year. Therefore, this itself weakens the claims of the Saudi observations

9. It is stated in a Hadeeth from which we can understand that we should stop and start fasting in accordance with the moon sighting complete 30 days of Sha'ban if moon sighting is not possible due to distorted visibility. If we look at reality, we have left the practice upon this Hadeeth. What, don't we have permission to keep complete 30 days of Sha'ban or Ramadhan? Don't we have the flexibility to wait instead of jumping to conclusions and acting upon Saudi's hasty sighting where there is a great possibility of our Ibaadah not being accepted because it is done before due time? We should therefore act only upon such verdicts that save us from ruining our Ibaadah.

10. From a Hanafi point of view, a single trustworthy person's sighting is accepted for fasting, but for the sighting of Eid, it is important for a large group of people to give evidence of the moon being sighted. A number of people upon whom others have confidence and satisfaction. Whereas according to them (the Saudi) one or two persons sighting is accepted for Eid.

11. There has always been an atmosphere of controversy, confusion and argument amongst the Scholars and the general community whenever Saudi has made hasty announcements about the sighting and whenever they complete 30 days there is peace and satisfaction amongst the Muslim community. Our elders have always had doubts and suspicions regarding the Saudi announcements. If their dates were accepted to be accurate then Pakistan, India etc. would be under more obligation to follow them because they are more closer to Saudi than U.K. Hakeemul Ummah Sheikh Thanwi (RA) has stated and which is mentioned in Fatawa Raheemiyah at the end of volume seven, that if the observation of Saudi is proved to be accurate then the Muslims of India should follow Saudi. This was said approximately 60-70 years ago when in reality this has not been acted upon since, when there is only the Arabian Gulf separating the Indian sub-continent from Saudi and there is not much time difference between them as well.

12. If Saudi observation is followed blindly, people will avoid consulting the learned scholars and the responsible authorities. The sources of media are so advanced that people can learn the news of the moon sighting through telephone,

T.V. and satellite and many a time they start to spread the news by making their announcements before sunset. In future if this continues, then people will not wait for the announcement to be made from their local Mosques and it will be impossible to act contrary to these hasty announcements.

These are some major problems that have been created by acting upon premature announcements of the moon sighting. What is happening in this country is that scholars of all different schools of thought are constantly trying to figure out a solution for this great crisis, but unfortunately a great majority of our scholars following the Deobandi school of thought are sleeping with a content mind deceptively assured that what was made permissible for certain circumstances under temporary conditions can be made practical in all situations, even though we have understood hasty actions can ruin our Ibaadah whereas delaying does not.

Alhumdolillah, a number of people who take interest in knowledge and research including our up and coming generations of Muslims here in the U.K. who hold great knowledge and are fluent in English, understand the weaknesses of Saudi observations.

At the moment in time, what we need is for the local scholars to sit down and acknowledge the weakness of these premature announcements and the problems that are arising from them. The general public still awaits for the correct announcements to be made. It would prove to be a great step in the right direction even if there is a single scholar in each locality who takes up the responsibility of explaining to the community the reality of these hasty announcements.

The scholars of truth have always had a habit of not being afraid of speaking the truth regardless of any opposition. I have firm and full belief through my knowledge and experience that the general community possesses the capability to accept these changes because they are in view of the problems and weaknesses created by the Saudi premature announcements. If it is done with great wisdom, by pointing out the errors and respective corrections, through lectures or private gatherings, there will be no sign of any uproar or aggression. May Allah grant us all the ability to rectify and correct (Ameen).

Answer: "I have studied your queries very attentively. It has been written from here in the past that announcements should be made for the sighting of the moon, based on information of sightings from your close country. It is incorrect to make announcements of Eid and Ramadhan by following Saudi for the sake of ease. Even if a fatwa has been obtained for this purpose, it is against the principles of Shariah. There is a far greater distance between Britain and Saudi whereas Morocco is a lot closer to Britain. To abandon a close country's sightings and to accept Saudis sighting, is in contradiction with the principles of Fiqh. Thereafter considering the state of Saudi observations and the difficulties that are arising from them, which you have written and attention towards; no decision should be ever made blindly in accordance with the Saudi observations. You should enforce with full strength the practice of following Morocco sightings. This is the closest to the truth."

Allah Knows Best.
Mufti Habibur Rahman
Mufti Darul-uloom Deoband
18th of Safar 1424 AH”

The Answer is correct!
Hazrat Maulana Kafeelur-Rahman Nishat
Hazrat Maulana Mufti Zafeeruddin
Hazrat Mufti Muhammed Abdullah

Mazahirul-uloom (Saharanpur):

The answer is correct and in accordance with the principles of Shariah. The countries closer in distance should be considered where there isn't a lot of difference between sunrise and sunset times.”

Mufti Muhammed Tahir Mazahirri
Mufti Mazahirul-uloom Saharanpur
1st of Sha'aban 1424 AH”

Madrasad Islamic Taleemud Deen Dhabail, Gujarat:

I also fully agree with the answer.”

Mufti Ahmed Khan Puri
Madrasa Islamia Taleemud-Deen Dhabail”

Hazratjee Maulana Inamul Hasan (RA):

Bangla Wali Masjid

15 Shabaan 1407

15 April 1987

Dear Hafiz Patel Sahib and other members of the Shuraa and all the responsible brothers of this work of Dawah.

The blessed month is coming close. On this occasion there has been a long controversy in regards with the sighting of the moon. Ramadhan Mubarak and the Eids are the fundamental basis of Islam. We need to be very cautious and fearful in this matter because making right or wrong judgement can lead the whole country in the right or wrong direction.

On these occasions the responsible brothers have a very grave duty upon them, especially when people are relying on them heavily due to the great effort of this work people throughout the country accept their decisions. It is very clear and evident in the Qur'an regarding the cycles of the moon and sun... It is possible to find errors in the calculations of the humans but there is no flaw in the calculations of the creator.

The English dates that are set by the experts of this field are possible dates of sighting the moon. We do not have to trust them but staying within the bounds of Shariah if there is any sighting of the moon then Ramadhan and Eid will commence or else it will be the following day without doubt. This is no innovated system but this is practiced all over the place and neither does anyone have any objections about it. Wherever the horizon is clear and there is a sighting of the moon on that date it is brought into action and if not then it is without doubt the following day.

Now what is left is that when, claims of moon sighting is made even before there is any slightest possibility of sighting. There is no credit given to this type of claims and it is against the actions of *Jamhoor Ulama* as well. To be cautious in regards with this matter, we can take calculations from experts in the Astronomical field which will include Muslims and non-Muslims. From our point of view we consider Dr Ilyas of Malaysia as a Muslim expert in this field.

Assistance can be taken from the Nautical Almanac Office of England. If their calculated dates turn out to correct then it will be understood that there was possibility of sighting the moon on that date and if there was no Shar'ee sighting of the moon on that date then the following date will be considered as definite. It is not hidden from you brothers that expert astronomers calculate the dates of solar and lunar eclipses many years beforehand and thousands of people visibly experience these eclipses on these dates where there are clear skies. Similar is the situation of sighting of the moon with more or less a difference of one day.

Therefore on such occasions where their dates are not accepted to be exact, at the same time you cannot completely reject their calculations. Instead, whilst staying within the bounds of Shariah, advantage should be taken of their calculations.

From: Hadharat Jee

Written by: Raheem Dadkhan

Note; Three, four copies of this issue have been sent to different members of the Shuraa. It should be read in front of all members of the Shuraa incase anyone does not get a copy of it

Jamia Islamia Binori Town, Karachi:

Therefore in the following circumstances it is necessary for the Muslims in England to follow Morocco or Algeria whichever is closer to England. It is not permissible to follow Saudia, Pakistan or any other country which is far from England.”

Written by Mufti Abdul-Kareem Deenpuri

21st of Ramadhan 1424”

Jamia Khairul Madaris, Multan

We have learned from very reliable sources that the thirty two years Saudi Calendar has been set according to Greenwich (London) and the announcements for Eid, Ramadhan are made according to it and not according to moon sighting or by following principles laid down in the Islamic Shariah. A basic proof of this fact is the statements made in the forward of Saudi Calendar.

The second proof is that when officials of Waizarat Ad-Difah wal Tairan were asked that on 21st of February 1993 it will be 30th of Sha’ban but is there actually a chance of sighting the moon; both ministries admitted that according to moon sighting calculations there was no chance of sighting yet Ramadhan was announced in Saudia the next day.

The third proof is that in Saudia moon sighting is not common amongst the common population despite clear horizons; no one can be presented in Saudi Arabia who has fasted upon sighting the moon himself even though in case of clear horizon, perpetual sighting is necessary.

The fourth proof is that the moon is generally sighted elsewhere 2-3 days afterwards.

The fifth proof is that the phases of moon are out of synch i.e. full moon is not seen on the fourteenth in Saudi etc and these can be seen by anyone in Saudia.

Based on these evidences it is can be deduced that moon sighing is not practiced in Saudi Arabia. Therefore to make Saudi the basis of these decisions would be wasting your acts of worship and this is also the opinion of Hazrat Mufti Taqi Usmani.

Mufti Abdul-Sattar
Mufti Muhammad Abdullah
24th of Jamidul-Thani 1424”

Mufti Muhammed Ismael Kachalwi, UK:

Under the circumstances that you have written and described we don’t believe it correct for the Muslims of United Kingdom to follow the moon sighting of Saudi Arabia and it was evident from their announcement of 1st of Muharram 1412 and 1st of Rajab 1412 as the earth has only one sun and moon and there was a solar eclipse in Hawaii at the time of their observance of crescent for Muharram and solar eclipse at in America at their time of crescent observance of Rajab and pictures were taken of this event...It is also written in Ahsan-Fatawa that due to the sighting in Saudia being against the principles of the Hanafi Madhab and established science it is unacceptable for Pakistan therefore it cannot be regarded as acceptable for the Muslims in the United Kingdom either