

Islamic Guidelines for Determining the Beginning and End of Ramadaan

(Adopted by the Islamic Center of Raleigh, NC since March 23, 1987)

Just as fasting the month of Ramadaan is a pillar of Islaam, the criteria that marks the start and end of Ramadaan is set by Islaam as well. The crescent moon marks the beginning of each lunar month in Islaam, as Allaah ﷻ stated in the Qur'aan in what may be translated as, **“They ask you [O Muhammad] about the crescent moons, Say, ‘They are measurements of time for the people and for *hajj* (pilgrimage).’”** [Surat Al-Baqarah, verse 189]

Therefore, the **Islamic Center of Raleigh** has adopted the following guidelines for determining the beginning and end of the month of Ramadaan:

1. To confirm the beginning of Ramadaan, there must be a visual sighting of the crescent moon of Ramadaan. In several *hadiths*, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ directed Muslims to follow this procedure to determine the beginning of Ramadaan and the end of it. Abû Hurayrah ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, *"Fast after you have seen it [the crescent moon] and end the fast [at the end of the month] when you see it. If it is hidden from you, then wait until the thirty days of Sha'baan have passed."* [Recorded by Imaams al-Bukhârî and Muslim]
2. Any sighting of the new crescent, anywhere in the world, is considered valid and acceptable for determining the beginning and end of the month of Ramadaan. Most Muslim jurists including Imaam Abu Haneefah, Imaam Maalik and Imaam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal have adopted this opinion. In other words, if the new crescent is seen anywhere in the world, it becomes obligatory for all Muslims to begin fasting, as the Prophet ﷺ said, *"Fast after you have seen it [the crescent moon] and end the fast [at the end of the month] when you see it."* This *hadith* is a general address directed to the whole Muslim world. That is, if anyone sees the new crescent in any place, then this will be a valid sighting for all Muslims.
3. The sighting of the new crescent by a single Muslim is sufficient evidence for the beginning of the month of Ramadaan. Ibn `Umar ؓ said, *“The people were looking for the crescent moon and when I reported to the Messenger of Allaah that I had seen it, he fasted and ordered the people to fast.”* [Authentic *hadith* recorded by Imaams Abû Dawûd, Al-Hâkim and Ibn Hibbân]. However, for the sighting of the new crescent of Shawwâl, the visual sighting of the moon by two Muslims is required as has been adopted by some Muslim Jurists. Since Muslims are fasting in worship to Allaah during this time, it is important for there to be two Muslim witnesses to sight the new crescent, leaving no doubt of their sightings. This is required to insure that Muslims will not end their act of worship without being certain.
4. For the visual sighting to be valid, the sighting must take place after the sunset of the twenty-ninth day of the lunar month. Therefore, any report claiming the new crescent was spotted before sunset is invalid.

5. At the **Islamic Center of Raleigh**, reliable individuals will attempt to sight the crescent moon locally within the above mentioned time. If the crescent moon is seen locally by any reliable Muslim, then we will abide by it. Otherwise, we will contact individuals and Islamic organizations around the U.S. and abroad to confirm the moon sighting. If there is confirmation that the crescent moon has been sighted, we will adopt it. If no crescent moon is seen or reported during the above mentioned time, then we will complete the current lunar month to the maximum of thirty days, as prescribed in the authentic *hadith* of the Prophet ﷺ.

6. We at the **Islamic Center of Raleigh** do not depend solely on astronomical data to determine the completion of a lunar month. However, astronomical data can be used along with the visual sighting of the crescent moon. There are two instances in which astronomical data can be used: first, to assist with the possibility of a crescent moon sighting; second, to help with the impossibility of a crescent moon sighting. That is, we reject a crescent moon sighting if the data indicate one of the following two facts: the crescent moon has not yet been born, or the crescent has set before sunset. In other words, if the crescent moon has not yet been born or if the crescent sets before the sun then it is scientifically impossible to sight it and that is why that sighting is rejected.

We ask Allaah ﷻ to guide us in our efforts to adopt these guidelines to unify the local Muslim community on these two special occasions. *Aameen*