

Ramadhan Statement for the Muslim Community

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In the name of Allah, The Source of Mercy, The Merciful.

Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated, "I heard Allah's Messenger (The blessing and peace of Allah be upon him) saying, "When you see the crescent (of Ramadhan), start fasting, and when you see the crescent (of the month of Shawwal), stop fasting; and if the sky is overcast (and you can't see it) then regard the month of Ramadan as of 30 day." ¹

Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated, "Allah's Messenger (The blessing and peace of Allah be upon him) said, "The month (can be) 29 nights and do not fast till you see the moon, and if the sky is overcast, then complete Sha'ban as thirty days". ²

I. INTRODUCTION

Al-Ghazzali Centre for Islamic Sciences & Human Development considers the sighting of the moon as an important and integral responsibility upon Muslims, *Fardal-Kifaya*, in establishing Fast in the Blessed month of Ramadhan. Whilst we are aware of the numerous positions held by different communities, al-Ghazzali Centre does not intend to add or refute the practices of others. The aim of this Statement is for Muslims who are seeking accurate information about the controversy, and act decisively on the matter with a clear conscience, to have the facts available to them.

We make the following statements of fact:

- I. One of the unfortunate issues plaguing our community is the issue of moon-sighting. This controversy revolves around determining what is the optimal criterion for establishing the commencement and completion of Ramadhan. Al-Ghazzali Centre holds to the revival and transmission of traditional Islamic knowledge as a universally applicable System. We also recognise the validity of local moon sighting within a country (based on *Ikhtilaful Matali'* and *Ittihadul Matali'* positions of Fiqh), as well as the

¹ Bukhari 3:30:1900

² Bukhari 3:30:1907

choice to separate sighting due to regional time zones. Therefore Al-Ghazzali Centre recognises the moon sighting from anywhere in Australia confirmed by credible Muslim witnesses.

2. We acknowledge that astronomical calculations cannot be used as valid means for determining our Islamic dates. However, we do feel that scientific astronomical calculations, based on Islamic stipulated conditions, can act as a beneficial guide as to when it is possible, or impossible, to sight the crescent moon.

This report provides a brief statement based on the Sunnah as well as scientific data which supports the Sunnah, to clarify the following, pertaining particularly for the year 2005:

- i) A brief information on the theology of observing the moon to establish the month of Ramadhan as opposed to pre-determined calendars or statement to commence;
- ii) why any pre-determined statement by any organisation in Australia, or calendars asserting that 1st of Ramadhan commences on 5th October, ahead of moon sighting for the year 2005 is incorrect, technically and ethically;
- iii) The correct date to commence observing the crescent is 4th October, 2004, NOT 3rd October.

2. THEOLOGY BEHIND ESTABLISHING THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN

The argument on the matter is simply twofold- sighting the moon physically or to use pre-determined scientific calculations to determine the months, and so indeed Ramadhan. The argument for scientific pre-determination often is reduced to the assertion that because Allah has Willed the ability of humans to calculate such matters, using science, we should accept this proposition. This statement is usually backed by another assertion that observation was the best methodology at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace and blessings of Allah, and that they did not have the knowledge or ability as humans have now.

Al-Ghazzali Centre holds a different view, supported by a majority of Traditional Scholars throughout the world who reject pre-determined calculations. We do not aim to cause any conflict in the community, however, we do not back away from the clear evidences available that pre-determination of the moon crescent appearance was never intended in the first place, neither by Allah, The Creator, nor His Messenger ﷺ.

2.1 Qur'anic Evidence

The first evidence we rely on is based on the Qur'an. The holistic understanding of this evidence is commonly used in Fiqh for numerous other rulings, which are acceptable practice-*Qiyas*, or analogical deduction. In fact, the assertion that pre-determination is acceptable is also based on this tool of *Ijtihad*.

The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So whoever of you sights the month (of Ramadan i.e. is present at his home, witnessing the crescent), he must observe Saum (fasts) that month, and whoever is ill or on a journey, the same number [of days which one did not observe Saum (fasts) must be made up] from other days. Allah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you. (He wants that you) must complete the same number (of days), and that you must magnify Him for having guided you so that you may be grateful to Him.³

The critical term in this verse is “*faman shahida minkum as-shahara*”, which means to the effect “those from you who have witnessed the month”. This verse has also been suggested to mean “those who are present at their home”. The meaning is still pointed towards presence and witnessing the month.

The argument is usually used to suggest that this “witnessing” can occur via pre-determined calculations, given that we have technologically advanced to calculate the phases of the moon. It will be articulated later, why this is incorrect in seeking to understand the objective of this verse.

The root meaning of the critical term “*shahida*” refers to a **witnessing which takes part in a physical form, as a form of proof**. Scholars of Arabic Grammar agree on this by unanimous consensus. Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, who was the first man to collect Arabic words and elaborate its meaning, also clearly holds this view. Khalil, who used Ibn Abbas's collection to formulate the world's first dictionary in any language (this of course being in Arabic), published this fact in his works, “*Ayn*”. Scholars who study Grammar consider this work to be the most authoritative in understanding the depths of meaning of Arabic words. “*Shahada*” cannot happen in a simulated manner. It has to occur in a physical

³ Qur'an[2:185]

form as a form of proof. Of course, the result of “*shahida*”, i.e., the witnessing can be recorded, and this should not be misunderstood with the witnessing itself.

Therefore, it is clear in this verse, that some form of witnessing is required to establish the presence of the month of Ramadhan (this also applies to all lunar months for Muslims, which al-Ghazzali Centre undertakes and records on a monthly basis ⁴).

Having established that a form of witnessing is required to establish fasting, it is important to eliminate the possibility of the acceptance of calculation as a means to establish it.

The Qur’an is the Word of Allah. Allah is All-Aware of the progresses human beings will undergo, including the ability to pre-determine moon phases. The term “moon phases” is specifically used here, because that is what human beings can establish... *not the visibility of the actual crescent*. Even today, it is not possible for science to predict visibility of the crescent-**the criteria** by which all Scholars agree that the Islamic months are established based on the Prophetic Tradition. In other words, it is not the moon phases that Islamic Tradition calls for, but for the observation of the moon crescent. We will return to the technical basis of this, in the later parts of this report.

The pre-determination is based on calculations. And the fact is that Allah, The Wise, has used the term “to calculate” in the Qur’an. This specific information is paramount and essential to come to a holistic understanding and acceptance of the fact that if Allah, The Wise, wanted calculated pre-determination as a means to establish fasting or the months, this would have been clearly stated in the Qur’an and the Prophetic Tradition, by the use of the term referring to calculation. It was nothing new, nor anything impossible for Allah to have revealed it to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Allah revealed in the Qur’an:

The sun and the moon run on their fixed courses, calculated with measured out stages for each. ⁵

The key term in this verse is “*bihusbaan*”, its root extraction from “*hasaba*”. This word is of particular significance, since it means “to calculate”. This alone is clear evidence that Allah revealed to His Messenger ﷺ, the concept of astronomical calculations, yet Allah limited the

⁴ <http://alghazzali.org/events/calender>

⁵ Qur’an[55:5]

method of establishing the commencement of fasting through observation of the crescent as proof.

Furthermore, Allah has revealed quantitative calculations in the Qur'an. An example of this is the laws of inheritance. History is clear that such calculations were not only new for the people of Arabia, but an unknown territory for the world. Numerals with fractions, as well as the quantum zero, was established or refined from the laws of inheritance revealed in the Qur'an itself.

Allah is the Creator of heavens and earth, and all that exists in it. If the phases of the moon were of importance and the determining factor, and if there was no requirement to sight or observe the actual crescent, the Qur'an is evidence that such a directive would have been revealed for Muslims to fulfil their obligations to Allah. The language of the Qur'an on this matter is literal, and there is no room for the possibility of metaphorical interpretations. In fact, it would be counter to a very basic Principle of Islamic Law and Methodology, that the literal meaning must be given precedence unless there is clear evidence to suggest a metaphorical meaning. To do so would be what is referred to in Fiqh as "*shaadh*" or "odd" of that person. Allah has not left ambiguity or interpretative injunctions on Muslims as a method to perfect their Deen.

2.2 Evidence from Prophetic Tradition

Whilst the Qur'anic evidence should suffice, it is always helpful to see how the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, actually manifested those injunctions in reality.

The two opening Ahadeeth quoted at the beginning of this Statement, is sufficient evidence to confirm the Qur'anic evidence. The critical words in those ahadeeth are "*ra'aitum*" or its derivatives, which specifically mean "to look" or "to observe". As a side note, this word is very different from another common word denoting watching- "*nadhara*" or "to see".

To look or observe, "*ra'aitum*", means to pay attention in the observation. To see something, "*nadhara*", as the root derivative, means that one sees something in passing or can decipher something.

In addition, "*ra'aitum*" has no synonymous meaning with calculation. It has clear relevance to the concept of observation.

Further, and most importantly, the Hadeeth does not allude to the ‘birth’ of the new moon, normally referred to as “conjunction”, nor the day after. In fact it suggests that these two days of uncertainty can be left out from the establishment of the month. If the accuracy of the moon phase was of any importance, it is quite clear, knowing the complex nature of some of Islamic rulings, this would have been clearly mentioned. To the contrary, the Messenger of Allah, ﷺ, mentioned the earliest possible observation of the moon crescent itself, not the moon phases. The calendars however indicate information of the birth of the new moon, which is entirely different in meaning as well as to the statement of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

The Arabic word referred to in the Ahadeeth is “*Hila*”. It refers particularly to the crescent, not the new moon. The Hadeeth requires of us to sight the crescent, not the new moon. Calendars and pre-determined statements can only refer to the new moon with any accuracy, not the crescent. It is clear from this matter alone, that the crescent must be observed, and not pre-determining the new moon.

These Ahadeeth also confirm that there is no reference to, nor any allusion to the phases of the moon, but purely to the observation of the crescent. They further confirm that Ramadhan is bound by the observation of the crescent for its commencement AND completion, where the days of fasting may validly vary from 29 to 30 days. There is absolutely no doubt in relation to this fact.

3. PRE-DETERMINED DATE – 5TH OCTOBER AND ITS INACCURACY

Al-Ghazzali Centre is aware that many calendars assert the date for 1st Ramadhan to be 5th October. Calendars do play a beneficial role, in that they provide a general guide to when we are expected to seek the crescent. But they are not definitive, nor is any statement declaring a date prior to the actual sighting. This section of the report aims to highlight the error in asserting such a statement, and why 5th October is problematic at the very least.

Al-Ghazzali Centre also emphasises, however, that only by coincidence Ramadhan is most likely to commence on 5th October.

Al-Ghazzali Centre urges the Muslim community in Australia to abstain from fasting from the 5th October, based on the predetermined statement. This, however, could be acceptable ONLY after actual sighting of a crescent on the evening of 4th October. This inaccuracy is not

based on whether calendar-based pre-determination is possible, but on reality of scientific facts that the proposed pre-determined date is incorrect in the first place.

In order to conclude how the pre-determined date of 5th October is incorrect, one needs to compare scientific facts about the moon alongside observed data. Below, both are published as part of Al-Ghazzali Centre’s actual and verified record of the data.

3.1 Observation of the Moon Data

i) Table I Monthly Observation- Australia ⁶

Lunar Calendar 1426/2005									
Lunar Month	Sighting Date	Moon Sighted	Sunset Time	New Moon Conjunction Date	New Moon Conjunction Time	Sighted Location	Lunar Month Commence Date	Lunar Month End Date	No. Days Total
Muharram	9/2/05	no	19:55	9/2/05	09:28	-	11/2/05	11/3/05	29
Safar	11/3/05	yes	19:21	10/3/05	20:11	Syd	12/3/05	10/4/05	30
Rabbi Ul-Awwal	9/4/05	no	17:42	9/4/05	06:32	-	11/4/05	10/5/05	30
Rabbi Ul-Thani	9/5/05	no	17:09	9/5/05	19:47	-	11/5/05	8/06/05	30
Juma Dil-Awwal	7/06/05	No	17:09	7/06/05	7:55	-	9/06/05	7/07/05	29
Juma Dil-Thani	7/07/05	Yes	17:01	6/07/05	22:02	Townsville	8/07/05	6/08/05	30
Rajab	5/08/05	No	17:18	5/08/05	13:05	-	7/08/05	5/09/05	30
Sha'ban	4/09/05	No	17:50	4/09/05	04:45	-	6/09/05		
Ramadan	4/10/05		18:01	3/10/05	20:28				
Shawwal									
Dhul Qaida									
Dhul Hijja									

⁶ <http://alghazzali.org/events/calender>

ii) Important Milestones and Scientific Data

The traditional method of eliminating error in calculations based on observation was to keep a thorough record of the two months preceding Ramadhan, i.e., Rajab and Sha'ban. These are important milestones, because their observance removes any previous errors. Al-Ghazzali Centre, however, has maintained a monthly record, which is cross-checked with scientific data.⁷ Both data- observed and scientific calculations- correlate, and so the al-Ghazzali Centre data is extremely reliable.

MONTH	NEW MOON DATE AND TIME	CRESCENT OBSERVATION APPROPRIATE DAY	OBSERVED CORRECT DAY OF MONTH	INCORRECT FIRST DAY OF MONTH	FIRST DAY OF NEXT MONTH SHOWN IN CALENDARS
Rajab	5th August 2005 @ 13:05	5th August 2005 (see note 1)	7th August 2005 (see note 2)	6th August 2005 (see note 3)	6th August 2005
Sha'ban	4th September 2005 @ 4:45	4th September 2005 (see note 4)	6th September 2005 (see note 5)	5th September 2005 (see note 6)	5th September 2005
Ramadhan	3rd October 2005 @ 20:28	4th October 2005 (see note 7)	To be observed	To be Observed (see note 8)	5th October 2005

Note 1

The correct day to have observed for the crescent of *Rajab* was 5th August because the new moon was born at 13:05, before the sunset of that day (a criteria for observations).

Note 2

Although 5th August was the appropriate day to observe for the crescent of *Rajab*, it is current scientific fact that it is impossible to sight the crescent that is less than some 18 hours from the birth of the new moon, the average being about 21 hours. In this case the moon was only approximately 4 hours old. Naturally, 6th August would be an impossibility as the first day of this month.

Note 3

As per note 2, it is incorrect to assume that the first day of the month of *Rajab* was 6th August. The correct date for the 1st of *Rajab* was 7th August, confirmed by sighting as well as scientific facts.

Note 4

The correct day to have observed for the crescent of *Sha'ban* was 4th September because the new moon was born at 4:45, before the sunset of that day (a criteria for observations).

Note 5

Although 4th September was the appropriate day to observe for the crescent of *Sha'ban*, it is current scientific fact that it is impossible to sight the crescent that is less than some 18 hours from the birth of the new moon, the average being about 21 hours. In this case the moon was approximately 18 hours old. There could have been a possibility to have sighted the moon, but a graver error in the calendar is evident. The calendars, due to their assumption of *Rajab*, state that the 29th day of *Rajab* fell on 3rd September. Given the scientific data, this cannot be true, since the moon was not born until after this day, i.e., 4th September.

⁷ Sydney Observatory and International Crescent Observation Project Data

Note 6

As per note 5, it is incorrect to assume that the first day of the month of *Sha'ban* was 5th August. The correct date for the 1st of *Sha'ban* was 6th August, confirmed by sighting as well as scientific facts.

Note 7

The correct day to observe for the crescent of *Ramadhan* is 4th October because the new moon was born at 20:28, before the sunset of 3rd October, the previous day (a criteria for observations). It is incorrect to sight the moon on the 3rd, because the moon was born well after the sunset of that day.

Note 8

Because ample time would have lapsed from the new moon til the time to observe the moon, it is highly likely that the crescent will be able to be seen on the evening of 4th October. The new moon will be at least 21 hours old. It would be highly likely therefore that the correct date for the 1st of *Ramadhan* will be 5th October, Insha Allah. However, it must be recognised that the calendars have stated that the 29th of *Sha'ban* (the first time the crescent can be legally observed under Shari'ah) is 3rd October. This cannot be possible and is incorrect, since the moon was only born well after the sunset of 3rd October, as explained in note 7 above. To hold 3rd October to be the evening to observe the crescent is looking for the crescent on the 28th of the lunar month- something totally contradictory to the Prophetic Tradition.

4. CORRECT DATE FOR OBSERVATION – 4TH OCTOBER 2005

It is clear from the above that the *pre-determined* date of 5th October to be asserted as the 1st day of *Ramadhan* is against the reality of the very science that the same pre-determined system is depending on, as well as that it is a great injustice to the Muslims who accept this statement to be credible.

As mentioned before however, it is highly likely that the moon will be sighted on the evening of 4th October, with *Ramadhan* commencing on the 5th. The principled difference is that the pre-determined statements and calendars make a gross error by going against the Sunnah of the Prophet, assuming that the 3rd October is the 29th of *Sha'ban*- the evening to observe the crescent. This is NOT true, because 3rd October in fact is 28th of *Sha'ban* by virtue of observation and scientific fact. Further, the calendars also assume that the 4th October is the 30th of *Sha'ban*, again incorrectly. On this basis, people following the pre-determined statements and calendars will be forced to commence fasting on either:

- i) 4th October due to the inherent assumption that 3rd October is 29th *Sha'ban* (which is factually wrong because the new moon would not have been born). Every lunar month, according to the Prophet is either 29 or 30 days, or;
- ii) 5th October due to the clear statement in calendars that 4th October is 30th *Sha'ban* (which is factually wrong because the new moon is less than 24 hours old- a criteria for moon phase calculation). This assumption removes the correct possibility that 1st

Ramadhan in fact could fall on 6th October based on the Prophetic Tradition which accepts 29 or 30 full days only for each lunar calendar.

Also note that if the moon was not sighted on 4th October (29th Sha'ban), it would be prohibited to fast on 5th October, which the Messenger of Allah termed "Day of Uncertainty".

Al-Ghazzali Centre urges Muslims in Australia to refrain from assuming that they can commence fasting on 5th October, until moon sighting efforts have completed on the night of 4th October. It is important that Muslims of Australia reject the pre-determined statement asserting 5th October as supposedly the 1st of Ramadhan.

Al-Ghazzali Centre urges Muslims in Australia to participate in observing the crescent of the moon, as mentioned by the Messenger of Allah to observe the crescent (not the new moon), on 4th October 2005, in order to verify whether 1st Ramadhan will be on 5th or 6th October.

There are many individuals as well as communities who are making good effort to observe the moon, not only for Ramadhan, but also for the establishment of the lunar months. However, due to their inability to confirm some very critical information, and by not keeping an accurate record, the actual date to make the effort to observe the crescent has also become a problematic issue. Al-Ghazzali Centre hopes to provide guidance to the community in this aspect, and encourage individuals and community organisations to utilise our database information, available at <http://alghazzali.org/events/calender>. We try our best to keep an updated record of retrospective and prospective data on moon sighting criteria, that meets the objectives of Islamic Principles on this matter.

5. CONCLUSION

Al-Ghazzali Centre concludes the following points based on scientific and Islamic evidences:

- i) The pre-determined date to commence Ramadhan on 5th October, cannot be established prior to the event itself, and so is incorrect;
- ii) It is incorrect to state that 4th October is 30th *Sha'ban*. This poses two factual problems. Firstly that 29th *Sha'ban* is on 3rd October, which is scientifically incorrect. Secondly, based on the moon age calculation, 5th October can be the 30th *Sha'ban*, and so the 1st *Ramadhan* could be on the 6th. The calendar, on this basis, incorrectly suggests that *Sha'ban* could have 31 days... which is Islamically incorrect.
- iii) The correct date to observe the crescent is 4th October in Australia.

For a live hourly update of the crescent moonsighting for this Ramadhan, visit <http://alghazzali.org/events/update>.

We pray to Allah to grant the Muslims ease during the month of Ramadhan through their fasting. We ask Allah to forgive us for any shortcomings and errors, and to give success to those seeking to participate in authentic principles of Islam. Peace and blessings of Allah upon His Beloved Prophet.