

NATIONAL

Moonsighting Conference

May 5-6, 2007

San Jose, California

A Summary of the Conference

Summarized by Hamood Aleem under the supervision of Imam Tahir Anwar

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Prayers and blessings be upon the best of creation, our master **Muhammad**, and upon his family and companions, and all who follow in their footsteps.

Introduction

On the 5th and 6th of May, 2007 the Bay Area in Northern California was host to the First National Moonsighting Conference. The Conference was organized and sponsored by the South Bay Islamic Association (SBIA) based in San Jose, California. The purpose of the conference was to develop sound criteria to validate moonsighting reports. Various speakers from across the nation were invited to present their ideas.

This paper is an attempt to summarize the main ideas presented at the conference and the resolutions that have been reached. It should be noted that the report is structured chronologically therefore any contradictory remarks on behalf of the speakers are to be disregarded and the resolution signed by the participants towards the end of the report is to be considered the final conclusion.

Imam Tahir Anwar, the Imam and Religious Director of SBIA, welcomed the panel of speakers to the conference and urged the respected participants to reach a viable conclusion by the end of the conference. Following the Imam's brief introductory remarks, Shaykh Obedur-Rahman, the chairman of the Islamic Shari'ah Council of California, welcomed the scholars that had gathered on this occasion and thanked them.

The Shaykh pointed out that the issue of moonsighting has divided the Umma and it is extremely important for the Islamic scholars to find a solution to this issue as they have done so in the past on other issues. In his opinion, the underlying cause for disunity in general and on this issue was due to the practice of leaving the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).



Imam Zaid Shakir (left), Imam Tahir Anwar (center), and Dr. Salman Shaikh (right).

The Shaykh went on to discuss the specifics of the methodology that his organization has adopted for the past 25 years on the issue of moonsighting. This includes basing their foundation on the hadith of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), establishing the existence of the *hilal* (crescent moon) on the horizon, the acceptability of the *shahadah* (testimony) from reliable Muslims if the *matla'* (horizon) is clear and if conditions permit valid moonsighting. He mentioned that the consideration of astronomical data is part of their process. Similarly, advice of astronomy experts, such as Dr. Omar Afzal, is also considered.

His assured everyone that cooperation from his organization was guaranteed as long as the *Shari'ah* was given priority. He felt it was a need of our time to sit down to

communicate with each other and amicably resolve our differences by discussing this issue in detail.

Imam Tahir Anwar on behalf of the South Bay Islamic Association went over the objectives of the conference and the method in which discussions were to take place. The following scholars and astronomy experts were present at the conference representing their respective organizations:

- ❖ Imam Tahir Anwar, South Bay Islamic Association and the Ulama Association of North America (UANA) (California)
- ❖ Imam Zaid Shakir, Zaytuna Institute (California)
- ❖ Shaykh Obedur Rahman, Islamic Shari'ah Council of California (California)
- ❖ Shaykh Mufti Mumtazul Haq, Islamic Shari'ah Council of California (California)
- ❖ Shaykh Mufti Mudassir Owais, Islamic Center of Fremont (California)
- ❖ Dr. Khalid Siddiqui, Islamic Shari'a Council of California (California)
- ❖ Shaykh Mufti Abdul Muqtadir, Bergen County Eid Committee (New Jersey)
- ❖ Shaykh Manzarul Islam, Islamic Center of High Point (North Carolina)
- ❖ Shaykh Dr. Ghulam Zarquani, Royat-e-Hilal Committee of North America (Texas)
- ❖ Qaiser Imam, Hilal Committee of Great Austin (Texas)
- ❖ Dr. Omar Afzal, Committee for Crescent Observation International (New York)
- ❖ Dr. Salman Shaikh, Hilal Sighting Committee of North America (New Jersey)
- ❖ Zaheer Uddin, Hilal Sighting Committee of North America (New York)
- ❖ Other individuals from various Muslim communities

The following distinguished scholars were invited but were unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts or other commitments.

- ❖ Shaykh Abdullah Saleem, Chicago Hilal Committee and UANA (Illinois)
- ❖ Shaykh Mufti Abdurrahman Ibn Yusuf, UANA (California)
- ❖ Shaykh Mufti Nawalur Rahman, Shari'ah Board of America (Illinois)
- ❖ Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, Zaytuna Institute (California)

Astronomical Data

The first session included presentations from Dr. Omar Afzal and Dr. Salman Shaikh on the subject of astronomical calculations and the role of these calculations in moonsighting to determine the Islamic months. Dr. Omar Afzal initiated the discussion by differentiating between the Islamic day and the Islamic date. The following is a summary of his talk:

Dr. Omar Afzal began by distinguishing between the Islamic day and the Islamic date. The Islamic day starts at *maghrib* (sunset), while the Islamic date is determined by the sighting of the *hilal* (crescent moon). In his opinion, we as a community have been unable to define these two concepts properly.

On a related note, he mentioned that Islamic Society of North America's (ISNA) decision to rely solely on astronomical calculations was flawed, because, he said, it was based on the birth of the *astronomical* new moon. According to Dr. Omar Afzal, ISNA starts their month a day before the actual date due to their adherence to the *astronomical* new moon in calculations. He also felt that another

problematic issue is that they follow Saudi Arabia for Eidul Adha rather than their own calendar.

He said that the main issue behind the concept of local moonsighting is that of the reliability of the reporters that claim to have seen the new moon. The issue of reliability arises, for the most part, due to a lack of clear guidelines on what constitutes a valid moonsighting, especially for the laypersons. Dr. Omar Afzal mentioned that for the past 29 years he has received many reports from individuals who have claimed have seen the crescent moon at times when it was impossible to do so [according to astronomical data]. In his advice to the '*Ulama* (Islamic scholars), he said that even though they rely on the hadith for the acceptance of *shahadah* (testimony), they still need to check simple facts about any moonsighting reports using astronomical data in order to validate them. He said that if we were to stick to "verifiable sighting", half of our problems today would be solved and that if someone claimed to see the crescent moon in the zone of uncertainty, as calculated by scientists, then that is not to be considered a valid sighting and is in fact impossible. He went on to say that the local time is different in locations geographically near each other due to the difference in moonset. In conclusion, he emphasized that the '*Ulama* need to further convince their congregation about ISNA's incorrect method.

Dr. Salman Shaikh of the Hilal Sighting Committee of North America offered his viewpoint which is summarized below:

He said there is a lot to learn from the mistakes made by Saudi authorities in their moonsighting procedures. Furthermore, by educating ourselves about the flaws and the history of the Saudi moonsighting process, he said, we have an opportunity to fix the moonsighting issue in America.

In determining the *wujud* (existence) of the *hilal* (crescent moon), the greatest factor is not the difference between the sunset and moonset times nor is it the age of the moon, rather, the primary factor is the angle between the sun and moon, according to Dr. Salman Shaikh. He went on to say that if that angle is less than the Danjon limit (agreed by the astronomers); the crescent moon



Imam Tahir Anwar addressing the participants

can not be seen. Also, the astronomical new moon is completely dark and invisible and quite different from the visible crescent *hilal* which typically occurs one or two days later. The Qur'an does not talk about this astronomical new moon (*Qamar Jadeed*), and instead the Qur'an refers to the thin visible crescent *hilal* with its characteristic crescent shape with two pointed ends described in Surah Yaseen as "*Urjoonil Qadeem*" – old (and withered) lower part of a date-stalk. Furthermore, he mentioned that the concept that the people of the east will see the new moon before the people of the west is not entirely correct because the world is round and therefore the new moon can be seen first by the people of the west. For example, the new moon can be seen first in California and then in Saudi

Arabia the following day, approximately 45% of all occasions. He mentioned the underlying reason we do not see this is because of the frequent mistakes in the Saudi moonsighting process.

Dr. Salman Shaikh said those who advocate *Ittihad Al-Matale'* (global moonsighting) in the west tend to accept only the Saudi moonsighting announcement and reject moonsighting announcements from any other country in the world therefore acting against the basic principle of global moonsighting. Fixing Saudi Arabia as the only place of *hilal* sighting for worldwide decisions is neither *Ikhtilaf Al-Matale'*, nor *Ittihad Al-Matale'* and has no basis in Shari'ah. Also this is proven wrong by the fact that on about 45% of the occasions, the people of California can see the *hilal* before it can be seen in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, as far as the adherence to *Ittihad Al-Matale'* (global moonsighting) is concerned, Dr. Shaikh does not advocate it because he firmly believes, from an astronomical standpoint, it is impossible to implement global moonsighting today, since by the time California sights the *hilal*, it is already next day morning in Japan – which is too late to start fasting! Moreover, he feels that *Ikhtilaf Al-Matale'* (local moonsighting) is strongly supported by astronomy, since the *hilal* visibility curves divide the world into two regions – one which could sight the *hilal* on the particular night and the other which cannot.

On the issue of ISNA's decision to adhere solely to astronomical calculations, Dr. Salman Shaikh mentioned that calculating the position of the moon is easy but calculating the *ru'yah* (sighting of the crescent moon) is difficult and has about a 25% "Zone of Uncertainty". Thus in about 25% of the occasions, when the western part of our *matla'* (horizon) lies in this Zone of Uncertainty, the calculations can not give a yes-no answer with certainty, and actual *hilal* sighting is the only recourse. Further, the calculations advocated by ISNA are not even based on *hilal* visibility in North America. Instead, ISNA's calculations include even a remote possibility of seeing a *hilal* with a telescope in the Southern Hemisphere at the International Dateline, which is 4 hours west of California time and 7 hours west of Eastern time, and are hence often one day ahead of reality.

Discussing the issues faced by the group which follows local moonsighting, he said that people who go out to sight the crescent moon should go in groups to check on each other. Further, in case of clear weather, the scholars require a "*Jamme Ghafir*" or a large number of witnesses. Also, the renowned jurist, Mufti Taqi Usmani has mentioned that in those cases also, where astronomical data has indicated the impossibility of *hilal* sighting, we need to insist on having a large number of witnesses, i.e. apply the *hukm* of clear weather in the astronomical impossibility case as well (even when whether is not clear).

Following the talk, a Q & A session took place in which numerous scholars offered differing viewpoints although they also agreed to a few points in line with the aims and objectives of this particular gathering. The key points were as follows:

- The issue of *shahadah* (testimony) of moonsighting from reliable Muslims is extremely important due to which, the reliance on astronomical data is considered secondary in this regard.

- The definition of *jumme' al-ghafir* (large number of witnesses) is when a group of people (of any number of people) cannot be considered to be lying about a sighting of the crescent moon.
- There is a need to learn from previous mistakes rather than dwelling on past issues. We should look forward so that we can pass a resolution to work around these issues.
- If the hilal committee '*Ulama* run into an issue where a small number of people are giving testimony, they should evaluate these claims according to astronomical data. It is not to say the people who sighted the crescent moon are lying; rather they very well may have seen something else since they are usually good and pious people.
- Astronomers should not make up their minds in advance about the impossibility of the sighting; rather people should be encouraged to sight the moon regardless of the astronomical data available so that they are rewarded for observing this form of *ibadah*.
- There is an agreement that the *matla'* (horizon) for contiguous North America (excluding Alaska and Hawaii) is one, hence there is no use in challenging this position at present.
- Testimony is to be accepted from Muslims regardless of their adherence to a certain school of thought.
- Guidance on authenticating moonsighting reports can possibly be taken from the science of authenticating hadith.

Unity, Moonsighting Criteria

Shaykh Mumtazul Haq and Zaheer Uddin spoke about the challenges facing the Muslim community in North America in relation to the issue of moonsighting. Shaykh Mumtazul Haq spoke on the issue of unity and urged the audience to formulate a unifying solution. His talk is summarized below.

Shaykh Mumtazul Haq began his talk by mentioning that while it is obvious that Islam encourages general unity, there are certain differences within Muslims which have been allowed. He said all types of unity is not necessarily acceptable, in fact unity in every aspect is not practical and bound not to work. For example, the people in the east cannot face the *qibla* direction that is used in the west. The fact of the matter is that unity is in diversity. He said we are diverse people and that is an undeniable fact. *Ikhtilaf Al-Matale'* (local moonsighting) has become a reality of today, in fact it has become such a reality that it is difficult to deny it all together, in his opinion. The Shaykh went on to say that *Ikhtilaf Al-Matale'* is based on the precept that a certain area is considered to be local unless if an area is distant and is considered far by the people than that area is not considered local. The point he mentioned here was that *Ikhtilaf Al-Matale'* is not very narrow in its definition, for e.g., San Francisco and San Jose are considered the same locality in relation to their respective lunar calendars.

Shaykh Mumtazul Haq mentioned that difference of opinion is a mercy. He said the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence do not endanger Islamic unity, hence two separate Eids in the world does not have a negative effect on unity. For the past 1400 years, the Ummah has celebrated Eid on different days. He said "Are we to say they were wrong?" and also mentioned that the issue of sighting the

moon was left to the people of their own area and that we need to keep in mind that it does not disunite us if we follow different schools of thoughts.

He stated that we certainly respect the good work ISNA has done in many areas over the years but we cannot agree with their recent decision on the moonsighting issue. Not all Islamic organizations should become a *mufti* according to him. The Shaykh pointed out that this conference today is an excellent opportunity to familiarize ourselves with *'Ulama* from different schools of thoughts and emphasized on developing a formula to resolve this issue before leaving this gathering (moonsighting conference).

Zaheer Uddin on behalf of the Hilal Sighting Committee of North America continued the discussion by analyzing the current situation of the community in relation to moonsighting and touching upon the important issue of the need for developing criteria for acceptable moonsighting reports. His talk is summarized below.



Dr. Omar Afzal (far left) speaks to the panel and the participants as they closely listen

The issue of moonsighting is one of the biggest challenges facing the Muslim community in North America today in Zaheer Uddin's opinion. He said there are essentially three types of moonsightings currently being followed. 1) The first one is global moonsighting, which is basically another name for "Saudi sighting" since those who fall in this category do not accept valid sightings from any country except Saudi Arabia. This is even though the Islamic scholars in Saudi Arabia strongly encourage Muslims in North America to adhere to and follow local moonsighting. 2) The second practice is

that which ISNA has recently aligned itself to, which is the rejection of the need to sight the moon physically with eyes. 3) The third practice for moonsighting in North America is that of local moonsighting. Unfortunately, he said the groups of people who advocate this position are disorganized due to lack of unity and consistency in their efforts. Among the local moonsighters, a new trend has emerged, that of accepting testimony of unreliable moonsighting reports. He said that we can tackle this issue by using astronomical science, as he thought that there was nothing wrong with using it. He mentioned that this issue can be overcome by applying the injunctions of the *Shari'ah* for all of the twelve Islamic months in the manner explained by Imam Subki and Mufti Taqi Usmani.

Zaheer Uddin proceeded by discussing the dynamics of people involved. He said the Muslim community in North America is extensive, including people with all sorts of expertise in the Islamic and secular sciences but unfortunately the current level of disunity is not helping us and our community of young adults is perhaps being negatively affected by this as well.

Furthermore, he rightly felt a need to follow the consensus of the *fuqaha* (Islamic jurists) unlike what ISNA has resorted to. To address this issue, the Hilal Sighting Committee of North America was formed. He said at this point, there are a

number of *hilal* watchers across the nation set up to provide reports from the across the country based on which the *shura* of the committee makes a decision. The *shura* of the Hilal Sighting Committee consists of scholars representing a multitude of schools of thoughts. Lastly, in this conference, he emphasized on the need to adopt a resolution to resolve this issue while giving due importance to astronomical facts.

Following the talks on moonsighting criteria and the need for unity, another discussion took place between the participants. The key points from the discussion are mentioned below.

- This effort (referring to the moonsighting conference) is the right way to achieve unity. We should coordinate more of such discussions in the near future and conduct seminars of this nature possibly also in other states. There is a need to broaden ourselves in understanding each other especially within the various '*Ulama*.
- A high level of organization is needed, especially in the western states (e.g., California), due to the fact the entire country looks west while awaiting the final moonsighting decision on the night of the 29th of the lunar month.
- A system or an umbrella organization which takes into consideration '*Ulama* from all places is a need of our time. To help in this regard, a database of mosques and organizations is needed. The new website hilalbase.com is a step in this direction.
- The group assembled today is not representative of all National Organizations but we should not underestimate the significance of this body since there is a good representation of people here who also have far reaching contacts.
- We should have a high level of standardization in our procedures.
- We should consider going over the existing criteria developed by the Hilal Sighting Committee of North America instead of "reinventing the wheel" by creating one from scratch. Required changes can be made to it as necessary.
- Contact information of the respected '*Ulama* and the astronomy experts needs to be made readily available after the conference to improve the ability to network within ourselves.

What is Ru'yah?

The third session focusing on the issue of *ru'yah* was conducted by Shaykh Manzarul Islam and Shaykh Dr. Ghulam Zarquani which mainly dealt with the need for *ru'yah* and the physical sighting of the crescent moon. The talk by Shaykh Manzarul Islam is summarized below.

He began by stating that it was a pleasure to see scholars from different schools of thought coming together to discuss this important issue. He said the basic issue at this point is whether *ru'yah* means 'ilm (knowledge) of the crescent moon or does it require physical sighting of the crescent moon. In order to begin fasting for the month of Ramadan, Shaykh Manzarul Islam said there is a need to have knowledge of the *ru'yah*. Based on this knowledge and the actual sighting, the month of Ramadan begins. The emphasis on looking for the crescent moon is very strong. It is evident that *ru'yah* does not mean just having knowledge of it rather it means to physically sight the crescent moon. This meaning is established by the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). From a historical perspective, no scholars have derived the meaning of 'ilm (knowledge) from *ru'yah* rather they have always sighted the moon physically.

The Shaykh went on to ask the question "Is *ru'yah* needed or not?" The *usul* (principles) explained by the *fuqaha* (jurists) are that if something is used to determine a *wajib* (necessary) and *fardh* (obligatory) act it itself becomes *wajib* and according to other scholars of Islamic law it becomes *mustahabb*



Shaykh Mumtazul Haq (right) and Zaheer Uddin (left) answer questions posed by the participants

(recommended). He said even if we accept the findings of astronomical science, it is still required to physically sight the crescent moon since according to *Hanafi fiqh* it is *wajib* to sight it physically. According to the *Shafi'i* and *Hanbali* schools of law, it is *mustahabb* while according to the *Maliki* school it is considered *wajib*. He concluded by mentioning that 'Allamah Ibn Rushd mentions that there is *'ijma* (consensus) of the Muslim scholars on sighting the crescent moon physically to determine the Islamic months.

Following Shaykh Manzarul Islam's brief talk, Shaykh Ghulam Zarquani carried the discussion forward by delivering a talk focusing on the need for *ru'yah* and its meaning as derived from the Holy Qur'an.

The situation currently by faced by Muslims in regards to moonsighting needs to be resolved according to the Shari'ah and not by molding the Shari'ah according to our desires. He said there are several points which are frequently used by those who advocate the use of a pre-determined lunar calendar compared to the Sunnah method of *ru'yah*. He mentioned that there are two basic meanings of *ru'yah* derived from the Qur'an, which are the *ru'yah* with eyes and the *ru'yah* with '*aql* (intellect). It can be deduced from the practice of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) that the meaning of *ru'yah* as evident from hadith is that of using the eyes, i.e. physically sighting the crescent moon. The Shaykh said Shaykh Ibn Baz has concluded a research by saying that when the *ru'yah* means two objects, it means *ru'yah* with '*aql* and when it means one object then it is *ru'yah* with the eyes and that it has to be kept in mind that Islam is not against using astronomical calculations. He went on to say that the question then arises,

if we can setup a calendar for our five daily prayers in advance then why should we not be able to set one up for the lunar months? There are several answers to this question provided by the Islamic scholars according to Shaykh Zarquani. One of them is that even though we chart out a calendar for our daily prayers but at the same time we have not given up the basic methods required to determine the timings for the daily prayers. He said in the case of daily prayers we can follow both ways although in the case of the crescent moon, we cannot have it both ways.

The Q & A session, which followed the talks, is summarized into the key points (below) which were made during the course of the discussion.

- Contrary to ISNA's claims, *ru'yah* is in fact considered *ibadah* (worship). The idea that *ru'yah* is not *ibadah* was invented by Dr. Mustafa Zarqa and his researched heavily influenced ISNA's decision.
- As far as the accessibility of moonsighting witnesses is concerned then what occurred in California last year will not be repeated. Several assurances were provided.
- Scientists and Astronomers also have differences in opinion (similar to the scholars) on issues and this also needs to be taken into consideration.
- There is absolutely no issue in using astronomical data as an aid in determining the validity of moonsighting.

The Resolution

The second day of the conference took place in Newark, California at Mehran Restaurant where in addition to the participants from the previous day, Imam Zaid Shakir of the Zaytuna Institute joined the conference and addressed the audience in a talk which is briefly summarized below.

After thanking the participants especially the distinguished scholars, Imam Zaid Shakir mentioned that we all know the moonsighting problem is unique to North America. He mentioned that in other countries around the world this problem is not rampant because of established institutions like Darul 'Uloom Deoband in India and Al-Azhar in Egypt. He said we there are Muslims from all over the world in this country including scholars from different parts of the world. He placed emphasis on scholars' to responsibly provide guidance on this issue.

Speaking on the historical aspect of moonsighting, he said the practice of moonsighting is nothing new. The Jews stopped sighting the moon physically due to political reasons; the roman emperor at that time persecuted the Jews and hampered their communication methods heavily. This led to their abandonment of physical sighting. The recent moonsighting decisions are due to political pressure since a lot of mosques are funded by Saudis. Due to such political pressure a lot of people follow along. Since the Iranian revolution, the Muslims have been torn between competing loyalties. The Salafi movement was directly influenced by Saudi Arabia as a counterweight to the Iranian revolution. The political pressure resulting from this influence led a lot of people to follow them in regards to moonsighting.

Imam Zaid Shakir said the practice of *ru'yah* is *ibadah*. The question of “What do we do when there is a contradiction between sighters?” was the key issue to be resolved in the conference according to Imam Zaid. He said resolving this issue involves the authority of organizations and individuals and that we do not need to see this issue as one of credibility rather we need to work on solving this problem. He said that when we see this as an issue of credibility then emotions get involved but when we see it as an effort to solve a problem for Muslims then it makes it easier for us to solve the issue. The Imam mentioned that this problem is tearing our communities apart, which in turn gives more credibility to the other camp which promotes sole reliance on their astronomical calculations to determine the lunar calendar. Furthermore, he urged the audience to come to a unified position. He mentioned again that it is certainly not an issue of credibility, rather it's about agreeing on criteria to solve a problem in order to serve the Muslims and something of this nature is not unprecedented. When the hadith were being gathered and when false hadith came about, the *'Ulama* agreed on the criteria for the acceptance of hadith. In conclusion he said it is important for us to set conditions and if those conditions are met then we should accept the sighting and if those conditions are not met then we should not accept the sighting. On a final note he mentioned that if we are able to achieve this (i.e. resolving the issue at hand) than we have done a great service to the Muslim community.

Following Imam Zaid's talk, he made a few proposals in regards to the moonsighting criteria which are summarized below.



From left to right: Shaykh Abdul Muqtadir, Shaykh Mumtazul Haq, Shaykh Obedur Rahman, Imam Zaid Shakir, Hamood Aleem, Dr. Salman Shaikh, and Zaheer Uddin.

If any sighting is inconsistent according to agreed upon astronomical conditions then that sighting should not be accepted. For example, a sighting is reported after moonset; in that case it should not be accepted. If the sighting is against the world record then it should be not be accepted. If the sighting is border line and not supported by an overwhelming number of people then it should not be accepted although when there is a slight chance complimented by numerous people in different locations then that is acceptable.

After much discussion and debate, the participants reached an agreed-upon conclusion due to the mercy of Allah Most High, at the end of the conference. The existing resolution of the Hilal Committee of North America was read out loud by Imam Tahir Anwar. A discussion followed and several amendments were made to it in light of the opinions of the scholars who participated. The new resolution was signed by the scholars, community members and scientists in attendance. It was a moment of joy and thankfulness for the participants as it was a step forward in the right direction to resolve this important issue facing our communities.

Resolution on Hilal Sighting
May 6, 2007 (Newark, California)

Bismillaah Walhamdulillaah WasSalaatu WasSalaam Ala Rasulillaah

We Muslims believe that our success in this life and the hereafter is in following the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (S).

We believe we can achieve unity among the Muslim community regarding the starting of all Islamic months, particularly Ramadan, Shawwal and the Dhul-Hijja by following the Hilal sighting by naked-eye in contiguous 48 states of USA and Canada

We believe the Shahada or reporting of Hilal sighting has to meet the criteria of the Shari'ah, i.e.:

1. The witness is a Muslim, sane, mature (at least reached the puberty age).
2. Known in his community to be sincere and truthful practicing Muslim
3. Accessible to Muslim Astronomers of Hilal Sighting Committee of NA for verification of the testimony.
4. If the elongation of the moon is less than 7 degree (Danjon limit), sighting claim is not acceptable.
5. If the elongation and altitude of the moon is between 7 and 10 degrees, we need approximate 50 witnesses each from 5 places (total approximate 250).
6. If the elongation of moon is between 10 and 12 degrees, altitude is less than 10 degrees, and moonset-sunset lag is > 35 minutes we need 10+ witnesses each from 3+ places if cloudy and Jamme Ghafeer if clear.
7. If the moon's elongation > 12 degree, altitude is > 10 degrees, we need 1 witness for Ramadan and 2 witnesses for all other months in case of cloudy skies and Jamme Ghafeer for clear skies.

We the Imams and Muslim leadership present here trust and have confidence in the Hilal Sighting Committee of North America to perform the task of Hilal sighting in a timely and professional manner.

The Shura of the Hilal Sighting Committee of North America that is consisting of Ulema of different schools of thought and the technical experts must make the final decision about the starting of the Islamic month within 4 hours after the sunset on the east coast (since we need to wait for sunset on the West coast if the Hilal is not sighted in the East and Midwest region of the US). The Ulema involved in this decision making should themselves be regular in sighting the Hilal and promoting this Sunnah.

The Muslim astronomy experts (Dr. Omar Afzal, Dr. M.A.K. Lodhi and Zaheer Uddin, Br. Qaiser Imam, Dr. Salman Zafar Shaikh, Br. Yousuf Ismail) will collect the data about the Hilal sighting and will provide to the Shura after scrutinizing it and advise the Ulema.

The member Masajid and Islamic Centers should receive the decision of Hilal Sighting Committee of North America every month via e-mail. Moreover, they or non-member Masajid and Centers or any individual can benefit through our www.hilalsighting.org website.


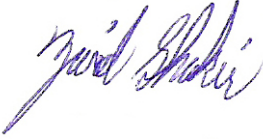
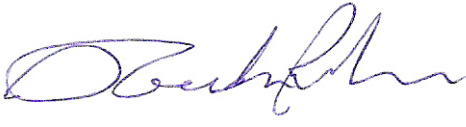
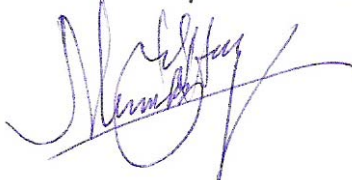

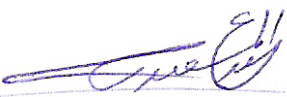





The Hilal Sighting Committee of North America would continue to base its decisions regarding the commencement of all lunar Islamic months on the reliable actual sighting of the Hilal with the naked eye anywhere in contiguous USA (48 states) and Canada.

The Hilal Sighting Committee of North America would use for reference the astronomical data to assist in making its decisions.

May Allah accept these efforts for His Deen and keep us united on right path.
Aameen.

Ref. Mufti Taqi Usmani paper ...

Signatories

Imam Tahir Anwar	
Imam Zaid Shakir	
Shaykh Obed Ur Rahman	
Shaykh Mufti Mumtazul Haq	
Shaykh Mufti Muddassir Owais	
Shaykh Mufti Abdul Muqtadir	
Shaykh Dr. Ghulam Zarquani	
Shaykh Manzarul Islam	
Dr. Salman Zafar Sheikh	
Dr. Omar Afzal	
Zaheer Uddin	



May Allah accept our efforts and grant us guidance and success. Amin.