



MASJID VAUGHAN POLICY ON ANNOUNCING RAMADAN AND THE TWO EIDS

Guidelines for Crescent Sighting, Decision-Making, and Public Communication

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INTRODUCTION

Masjid Vaughan recognizes the deep spiritual and communal importance of correctly determining the start of the Islamic months, especially those associated with major acts of worship such as Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha. The process of moon sighting (ru'yah) is not only a religious obligation but also a matter that impacts the unity and well-being of the local Muslim community.

In light of this responsibility, Masjid Vaughan has adopted a structured, transparent, and Shariah-based policy for determining the beginning of these sacred times. This document outlines the principles, conditions, deliberation process, and communication standards that guide all announcements related to the Islamic calendar.

PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

1. Uphold the integrity of Islamic legal tradition in determining the lunar months.
2. Ensure clarity, consistency, and accountability in Masjid Vaughan's moon sighting process.
3. Provide timely and respectful communication to the community.
4. Foster unity and tolerance by acknowledging valid scholarly differences.
5. Maintain transparency in decision-making and invite ongoing community trust and engagement.

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1. ESSENTIAL UNCHANGING PRINCIPLES

1.1. *Priority of Sighting*

Actual sighting (ru'yah) holds legal and religious authority over astronomical calculations, which may be used for support but not substitution.

1.2. *Role of Calculations in Validating Sightings*

Astronomical calculations cannot establish a new month but may be used to reject claims of a sighting when moon visibility is scientifically impossible.

1.3. *Lunar Month Length*

Islamic lunar months are either 29 or 30 days long—never 28 or 31—based on the natural lunar cycle.

1.4. *Commencement of a Month*

A new Islamic month begins with the sighting of the crescent moon (hilal) after sunset on the 29th day of the current month.

1.5. *Burden of Proof*

The responsibility to end an existing month and begin a new one lies on verified sighting or the completion of 30 days.

1.6. *Default Continuation*

If the crescent moon is not sighted, the current month is completed as 30 days before transitioning to the next month.

1.7. *Contextual Caution*

Greater caution is exercised when transitioning out of a month tied to obligatory acts of worship (e.g., Ramadan), as this affects both the obligation to fast and the prohibition of fasting on Eid.



2. CONDITIONS OF THE SIGHTING

2.1. *Timing*

A sighting will only be considered if it occurs after sunset on the 29th day of the current Islamic month, during the window in which the crescent moon is potentially visible—shortly after sunset and before moonset.

2.2. *Geographical Scope*

Only sightings from the following regions will be considered: North America, South America and the Caribbean.

2.3. *Witness Criteria*

Only reports from pubescent, upright, trustworthy Muslims will be accepted.

2.4. *Method of Sighting*

While optical-aid sightings (e.g., through telescopes or binoculars) may be considered valid in some scholarly opinions, only naked-eye moon sightings will be accepted for the purposes of this policy.

2.5. *Scientific Plausibility Clause*

Any reported moon sighting will be subject to a scientific plausibility assessment. Sightings that are deemed scientifically impossible will be respectfully rejected.

A sighting will be considered scientifically plausible only if the following minimum conditions are met at the location of the report:

- a) The Sun is below the horizon.
- b) The Moon is above the horizon.
- c) The angular separation between the Moon and the Sun (Danjon Limit) is at least 5 to 7 degrees.
- d) The Moon's age is a minimum of 18 hours, with rare exceptions considered if the Moon is between 15 to 17 hours old and all other conditions are clearly met.

These criteria help ensure consistency, reliability, and integrity in the moon sighting process, while respecting both traditional principles and modern astronomical knowledge.



2.6. *Number of Witnesses*

When skies are clear, testimony from a large group is required. When visibility is hindered (e.g., due to clouds, haze or visibility forecasts are improbable), fewer reliable witnesses may suffice, depending on the circumstances.

2.7. *Committee Reports*

When reports are very few or rare, any claims made by moon sighting committees should be accompanied by sufficient details, such as the location, exact time, visibility conditions, and identities or credentials of the witnesses involved.

2.8. *Accepted Forms of a Report*

- a. Telephone or electronic communication, on the condition that:
 1. The identity of the witness is recognized and confirmed;
 2. The witness is known and trusted;
 3. The information is corroborated through independent and reliable sources.
- b. Written confirmation from a recognized authority, such as a Hilal committee chairperson, qualified mufti, or credible scholar.
- c. Mass testimony (*istifada*): A large number of consistent reports from one or more regions may establish certainty and be accepted as conclusive.
- d. Delegated verification: A reliable representative is sent by a committee to the reporting region to verify the sighting firsthand and return with a clear pronouncement.



3. DELIBERATION PROCESS

3.1. *Initiation of Discussion*

Upon receiving a potentially valid moon sighting report—whether local or regional—the deliberation group shall convene, either virtually or in person, as soon as possible after sunset on the 29th day of the current Islamic month.

3.2. *Review of Policy and Evidence*

All reports will be reviewed in accordance with Masjid Vaughan's established moon sighting policy, taking into account the following factors:

- a) The geographic location and timing of the sighting.
- b) The credibility, number, and Islamic integrity of the witnesses.
- c) The sky conditions at the time of the sighting (clear or obscured).
- d) Any astronomical data indicating the impossibility or improbability of visibility.

3.3. *Consultation, Discussion and Deliberation*

- a) The process shall begin with the Managing Director and Executive Director of Risalah Foundation, who are responsible for initiating a thorough review of the matter. This includes:
 - Gathering and verifying moon sighting reports
 - Consulting reliable sources and scholarly opinions
 - Engaging selected staff members and experienced persons within the community with relevant expertise in Islamic jurisprudence and/or moon sighting procedures.
- b) Once initial findings are gathered, the Managing Director and Executive Director of Risalah Foundation will evaluate the evidence and develop a recommendation. Their deliberation will involve:
 - Reviewing relevant reports and witness accounts
 - Exploring differing viewpoints
 - Assessing ambiguities or challenges in the evidence
- c) The outcome of this process will be a written or verbal recommendation.



3.4. Decision and Approval

- a) The recommendation shall then be presented to the Head Imam of Masjid Vaughan, or in his absence, a qualified substitute appointed by Risalah's Managing Director, for final review and approval.
- b) If the Head Imam (or qualified substitute) approves the recommendation, it shall proceed to implementation.
- c) If the Head Imam (or qualified substitute) does not approve, and no consensus can be reached through further discussion, the matter shall be referred to the Risalah Foundation Shura Council.
 - Both supporting and opposing perspectives shall be presented to the Council by the relevant parties.
 - Any positions not explicitly supported by this policy document must be clearly noted and articulated by the Shura Council during their deliberation.
 - The final decision shall be made by a majority vote of the Shura Council.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

4.1. *Timing of Announcements*

No public announcement will be made until the final outcome is confirmed (as per 3.4).

The administration will make every effort to finalize and announce the decision regarding the start of a new Islamic month as early as possible—no later than 10:30 PM local time during the winter months, and before 11:59 PM during the summer months—on the 29th day of the current month.

Later announcements (between 11:30 PM and 1:00 AM) will be avoided unless extraordinary circumstances arise, to minimize community confusion and ensure preparation time for fasting or Eid.

4.2. *Sensitivity and Tolerance*

The administration acknowledges that differences in moon sighting methodology exist across the global Muslim community. We affirm that differences grounded in sound scholarly opinions are legitimate and do not affect the unity or validity of worship. Hence, the administration will communicate with respect and inclusivity, avoiding language that delegitimizes other valid approaches.



4.3. *Communication Channels*

Announcements will be made through official and accessible channels: Announcements within the masjid, Masjid Vaughan Website, Emails, Social media (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp), Automated phone/text system (if applicable), Public noticeboard at the masjid

A designated spokesperson or team member will be assigned to respond to community inquiries with clarity, consistency, and kindness.

4.4. *Transparency and Community Trust*

To ensure transparency and foster community trust, the methodology, criteria, and decision-making process outlined in this document will be made publicly accessible. The document will be reviewed annually and published on the Masjid Vaughan website under the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section.

Any changes to the process will be clearly communicated in advance.

4.5. *Community Education*

Prior to Ramadan and Dhul-Hijjah, Masjid Vaughan will provide educational sessions or materials to help the community understand:

The moon sighting process

The basis for our local and regional acceptance

The role of calculations vs. sighting

How the masjid ensures the decision is timely and trustworthy