

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Resolutions of the 6th National Ulama Conference

“The Shar’i Way to Unity in Moonsighting”

held on Safar 19, 1446 AH corresponding to August 24, 2024

الحمد لله الذي جعل الشمس والقمر بحسبان، وأهل علينا الهلال باليمن والإيمان، وصلى الله عليه وعلى آله وصحبه ومن تبعهم بإحسان، أما بعد

A Heartfelt Appeal to the Imams, Masjid Managements and Muslim Brothers and Sisters of the USA to Solve the Moonsighting Issues and Unite the Ummah

The Central Hilal Committee would like to share a way to resolve some of the tensions around the matter of moon sighting and unite the Muslims of the USA upon the Sunnah of sighting the moon every month.

CHC is an organization of Ulama and Imams from 25+ states across the USA who serve the respective masjid and communities all across America. Each of its members have served the Muslim community in the USA for many years, some even for the last 40+ years. Alhamdulillah, its members are imams from diverse backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of the Muslim community in the US, with an extensive amount of experience serving the Muslims in this nation.

We have seen a lot of confusion, disunity and misunderstandings related to such a simple commandment of our Deen and the time-tested system of this Ummah related to it.

Every year, we see many masjid in disarray about when and how to announce the beginning of Ramadan and the two Eids. Almost all masjid have an internal committee that decides upon Islamic dates which effectively follows someone else (who, many times, follows someone else, who follows someone else).

This causes confusion and tension, many times at a personal level, among the community members. There is no one central authority, who decides according to the parameters of the Shariah, on this matter. Yet the commandment of our Deen is one (and clear), the moon is one, the timing is one, and the nation we all live in is one.

To solve this exact problem, our member Ulama organized this effort in 2009 and decided to synchronize the efforts of moon sighting from coast to coast, every month. Without conducting this effort consistently every month from Muharram to Sha'ban, it is difficult to come to a valid decision about Ramadan or Eid. CHC organizes the monthly effort across America and takes reports of the sighting efforts into consideration before making one unified decision by our national Shura of knowledgeable and experienced Ulama and Imams.

Alhamdulillah, this effort of CHC has been extremely successful. Over the past 16 years, CHC has expanded its network to include hundreds of masjid and communities nationwide. Our social media platforms have tens of thousands of followers, and nearly one million Muslims regularly check our various online platforms for moon sighting information. We hope this issue will be resolved with complete unity and agreement in the coming decade, or even sooner, inshaAllah. An increasing number of masjid and communities are embracing this organized effort and centralized system of collaboration, putting an end to much confusion and a lot of the disunity.

We invite you to join this effort of CHC on a community-level by informing and educating the masjid managements to follow the announcement of CHC. On an individual-level, you can join the effort by studying our educational material (webinar recordings, articles, etc. available on our website) and spreading awareness and by keeping in touch with CHC alerts across all its platforms.

We find that some brothers are trying to advocate a complete replacement of moon sighting with astronomical calculations to avoid all the confusion, tension, and late-night announcements. We would like to clarify some issues along those lines as well.

Aside from the technical Fiqhi discussion of the matter (for those interested, please see CHC's publication, "A Miscalculation: A Refutation of Using Astronomical Calculations to Determine the Islamic Months" available on Amazon, or visit www.hilalcommittee.org and @CentralHilalCmt on Twitter, also), we find in the most sahih narrations of Rasulullah ﷺ, (found in Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, al-Sunan al-Arba'ah, and almost every other major collection of Hadith available to us today) that he explicitly forbade us from calculating the month beginnings (Sahih al-Bukhari, 1913; Sahih Muslim, 2380). Mind the fact that calculations of the lunar calendar existed, were quite developed (to nearly the same extent as it is today) and were in use by other nations in his time. He ﷺ explicitly prohibited beginning the month without a verified sighting (Sahih al-Bukhari, 1807; Sahih Muslim, 1080).

The tension around the late-night announcements alluded to by some reflects the breadth of the geographic span of the Muslim population in the USA coupled with the vastness of the nation we live in. This tension becomes a form of excitement as we patiently wait for the news. We have three time zones and a large number of Muslims in each time zone. Since we all reside in one land and are a small minority of the population, and the fact that the chances of sighting the moon are higher toward the west coast, we must patiently wait for a few hours (2-3 nights in the whole year) for the sunset where our other brothers are looking for the moon in the USA, if we do not receive a positive report in our own time zone by then. This wait can be as short as 1 hour after the sunset and at most 3 hours. With Ramadan coming in shorter days throughout the USA for the next 20 years, this natural waiting period will get easier and less burdensome.

Historically, this waiting time has never been an issue, and is still not an issue for many. It is as simple as educating the public to continue their Ramadan A'mal (or whichever month is in question) until any positive report comes, is verified thoroughly and decided upon. By default, the month continues until proven otherwise. Rasulullah ﷺ and the Sahabah, may Allah be pleased with them, had the same exact procedure in their time. We find in Hadith that people came late night or even at Fajr with sighting information and Nabi ﷺ decided then. The Ummah at large has done the same for the last 1400+ years. Of course, all of this was before the internet and telecommunication, which makes timely dissemination of such crucial information

seamless. The best of means should be utilized to help ease the tension of this matter. It also is as simple as publishing and announcing the clear policy of the masjid and how to stay connected for the information. Our experience as imams is that our communities do not lack means, alhamdulillah, and if we work together, we can become more disciplined and united, as is happening in many places.

Some argue that taking holidays on such short notice is not possible. This is a dilemma in conforming to the scheduling requirements of modern bureaucratic societies. The solution for this is as simple as planning ahead with the employer or school. In the cosmopolitan setting we live in, it is easy to explain that we need either two days off for Eid, twice a year, or one day off and one excused absence (regardless of paid or unpaid) contingent to moon sighting. Given the religious freedom and protection we enjoy as citizens of this nation, we find these solutions very feasible.

Finally, we believe it is our duty, as bearers of the knowledge of Rasulullah ﷺ to inform you about the effort of moon sighting in a clear way and provide a clear solution to call you towards it. Astronomical calculations are not a new development in science. Our Muslim scholars have mastered Astronomy for over a millennium and have contributed immensely to science. They have also unanimously stated (with the exception of a few recent individuals) that replacing moon sighting with these calculations is impermissible, invalid and akin to opposition of Rasulullah ﷺ.

In conclusion, we invite all imams and masjid management individuals to join with CHC and become a part of the effort, in action and in official public policy by following the monthly moon sighting announcements by CHC. We invite our fellow Muslims to adhere to the Sunnah, follow what is clearly proven by the Sunnah, and be a part of solving this problem for the coming generations of Muslims in the USA.

May Allah Ta'ala enable us all to do what pleases Him and accept it from us.

Resolutions Adopted

To address new issues and to increase awareness in newly included states, the Central Hilal Committee has been organizing conferences periodically. The sixth meeting was hosted by Darul Quran WasSunnah in Walden, New York, on 19th of Safar 1446 AH, corresponding to August 24, 2024.

Ulama from twenty-four (24) states participated, along with two esteemed scholars from abroad: Sheikh Mufti Syed Hussain Ahmed from Darul Ifta of Darul Uloom Karachi, and Sheikh Mufti Dr Shabbir Ahmed, Chairman of Moon Sighting Australia.

The following matters were unanimously approved by the attendees:

1. **Obligation of Moonsighting:** Sighting the moon and maintaining the Islamic calendar are Fard Kifayah (communal obligations) in light of hadith and the ijma' (consensus) of the Fuqaha'.
2. **Day of Eid al-Adha:** There is no connection between the Day of Arafah and Eid al-Adha in our matla' (horizon).
3. **Matla':** The matla' of Central Hilal Committee is reaffirmed based on previous resolutions, which includes North America, Panama, Trinidad, Chile, and Argentina. To include countries such as Brazil will be explored, with the three conditions set by CHC for the matla': (1) being within one of North America's time zones, (2) having an established and active moon sighting committee run by reliable Ulama who follow similar beliefs and policies as CHC, and (3) maintaining active communication and collaboration with CHC.
4. **Calculations for Moon Sighting:** Relying solely on calculations is not an acceptable method for determining moonsighting and deciding, although it may serve as an aid.
5. **Use of Optical Aids:** The use of common optical aids, such as the regular telescope and binoculars, is acceptable for moon sighting given the generally accepted hilal visibility conditions are met and the conditions of shahadah; however, the use of such tools is neither encouraged nor deemed necessary. Some scholars from one state had differing

opinions on this matter and agreed to gather their concerns and questions to submit to Darul Ifta, Darul Uloom Karachi, and to abide by whatever ruling is issued.

6. **Membership and Participation:** There are three ways to join the Central Hilal Committee: (1) Members: All Ulama and imams who agree with the committee's policies, (2) Representatives: Three representatives from each state who will remain informed about moonsighting in their state and will provide shahadah to the decision making committee, and (3) Coordinators: They will be responsible for researching and organizing monthly moon sighting efforts and maintaining communication with members and representatives. Interested individuals with relevant experience are encouraged to join.
7. **Central Announcement:** All affiliated committees will await the announcements from the Central Hilal Committee and will not announce prior to the central announcement.
8. **Conference Scheduling:** A CHC Conference is to be held every two years.