

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious Most Merciful

ISNA's Recent Decision Regarding the 1st of Ramadan and the 'Id

The method of beginning the lunar months has been explained to us through the authenticated hadiths of Allah's Messenger (Allah bless him and give him peace), therefore it is incorrect to say that this is a new issue or that it is ambiguous and requires *Ijtihad*. From the time of Allah's Messenger (Allah bless him and give him peace) to the present the criteria for beginning the lunar months has consistently been the sighting of the crescent.

There is a clear hadith narrated in *Sahih Bukhari* "Fast upon seeing it and end fasting upon seeing it. If it is cloudy complete 30 days." Arabic linguists do not accept allegorical meanings of a word when the literal meaning of it is possible. In the above cited narration, the literal meaning, "the physical sighting of the crescent," is a possible meaning, and thus there is no plausible cause for an alternate explanation.

Another hadith narrated in *Sahih Bukhari*, "We are illiterate people, we do not write nor do we count. A month is this or this" (29 or 30 days). This narration only shows that the number of days in a lunar month is either 29 or 30. This hadith has no bearing on the criteria for beginning a lunar month.

ISNA's Fiqh Council has changed and adopted various decisions in the past regarding the commencement of Ramadan and the 'Id. The Fiqh Council's recent decision that the commencement of the lunar months according to Shariah does not depend on the sighting of the crescent and the lunar month will commence with the birth of the new moon anywhere in the world after 12:00 Greenwich Time. In the light of Quran and Sunnah this decision is completely incorrect. It is regretful and misleading for ISNA's Fiqh Council to state that the Islamic Scholars in the past and the present have differed in their view as to calculation verses sighting regarding the beginning of lunar months. By this, ISNA can announce in advance the dates of the 'Id and the 1st of Ramadan. The reality is that Islamic Scholars in the past and the present have consistently agreed on the position that lunar months should begin with sighting not calculation. Assuming a few Scholars have held the opposite view (i.e. that of calculation), their difference of opinion can not overrule the view of the overwhelming majority.

It is unclear if this decision is for all 12 lunar months or just for the 'Id and the 1st of Ramadan. If this decision is implemented we believe it will only create further difficulty in bringing about unity among the Muslim Community at large.

The Ulama Association of North America (UANA) unequivocally declares that lunar months should begin with sighting and not with calculation. This is the ruling of Shari'ah and we must abide by it. ISNA's Fiqh Council has created confusion in the minds of Muslims before due to its decisions and we implore that that they avoid doing this.