



New moons, different sighting locations and astronomy calculations

Fatwa no. 256

Q 1:

How can we sight the crescent moon of Ramadan in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia? I would like to know the way of sighting the new moon. Who is officially responsible for announcing the sighting of the new moon?

2:

Is the radio broadcast among the Shar'y (Islamic legal) means that one can rely on to begin Sawm (Fasting) when announced? Does the radio broadcast meet the legal conditions required in the witness who confirm the sighting of the new moon in order to commence observing Sawm based on such announcement?

3:

Are telephone and telegraphs considered official Shar'y means of communication that can be trusted in this regard, though one does not know the person who is talking or the person sending the telegraph?

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A: Due to the importance of knowing the first day of the month of Sha'ban because of being related to the month of Ramadan, the Ministry of Justice sends a circulated note to all courts during the month of Rajab that all judges should inform people to sight the crescent moon of the month of Sha'ban. During the last days of the month of Sha'ban, the supreme judicial authority in the Ministry of Justice holds meetings for studying what is sent of testimonies concerning sighting the crescent moon of Sha'ban. After studying this issue, the judicial authority issues a decision according to what is legally confirmed concerning the first day of Sha'ban. Accordingly, we can determine the night when we can sight the new moon of Ramadan which is the night before the thirtieth of Sha'ban. Consequently, a circulated note is sent to all judges, who, on the night before the thirtieth of Sha'ban, become well-prepared to receive any witness who testifies to sighting the new moon. After verifying his testimony, making sure that he is truthful and discussing with him the way, place and the time of sighting the new moon and other questions

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that confirm that he is truthful, the judge sends a telegraph to the Ministry of Justice about this testimony. At the same time, the Supreme Judicial Authority holds a meeting in the headquarters of the Ministry of Justice in order to study what the judges sent in this regard. When the board is sure about sighting the new moon of the blessed month of Ramadan, it prepares a decision that confirms sighting the new moon. After signing the decision by the royal authority, the decision is circulated to all judges in order to inform all people through radio and television. The testimony of one just and upright person is sufficient to confirm the sighting of the new moon of Ramadan. It was reported that

Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said: (The people gathered to sight the new moon, so I informed the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) that I had sighted it. He (peace be upon him) fasted and commanded the people to fast.) (Reported by Abu Dawud and Al-Daraqutny) As for the news propagated by radio or telegraph concerning sighting the new moon, confirming the beginning or end of the month, they will be accepted as reliable sources of information. They are related to the state and no one dares to fabricate lies or add or delete any part of the news. Officials used to pay great attention to these means with regard to absolute accuracy in conveying messages or news.

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Therefore, we can accept the news broadcasted through these means even though the broadcaster is not well-known to us.

As for the telephone, it needs much verification and investigation about the person who conveys this news to you with regard to his uprightness and accuracy in reporting news. Telephone is not like radio or other reliable means, because telephone is a publicly used device.

May Allah grant us success! May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and Companions!

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Source: Fatwas of the Permanent Committee