

Determination of Eid al-Adha

Justice Maulana Mufti M. Taqi Usmani

[This article is included here for academic interest only. This year (1421 AH), The Shura Council of North America (which includes ISNA) has unanimously agreed to base Eid al-Adha determination on local moonsighting in North America. This welcome decision should end all controversy on this subject and bring about the same unity on Eid al-Adha that we have been witnessing on Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr.

Historical Note: A few years ago Islamic Society Of North America (ISNA) had widely circulated a paper regarding determination of Eid al-Adha. It strongly suggested that all over the world Eid al-Adha determination should follow the announcement of Hajj dates in Saudi Arabia. Here is a scholarly evaluation of that claim by [Mufti Taqi Usmani](#).]

I have gone through the article of ISNA and with the utmost respect for their sentiment for Muslim unity, I am forced to say that the view expressed in the article (Eid al-Adha on next day of Arafat) is in total disagreement with the teachings of Quran and Sunnah, and with the Shari'ah position recognized throughout the centuries. This is an unprecedented view which has never been adopted by any of the Muslim jurists during the past 1400 years, and it has a number of intrinsic defects and anomalies, some of which are summarized here.

1. The article admits that the celebration of Eid al-Fitr should be tied to the sighting of the moon in each country and should not be linked with the celebration of Eid al-Fitr in Saudi Arabia. At the same time, however, the article calls for celebration of Eid al-Adha according to the Saudi Calendar regardless of the local dates, which means Eid al-Adha will be celebrated in North America on 8th or 9th of Zul-Hajjah. It is thus clear that the theory proposed in ISNA's article is impractical.
2. The article has laid much emphasis on the concept of unity of the Muslim Ummah, which no one can deny. At the same time, however, one must appreciate that unity does not mean that the entire Muslim Ummah throughout the world should perform their acts of worship at one and the same time, because it is physically not possible. It is evident that when people in Saudi Arabia are performing their Fajr prayers, those in North America may still have not completed their Isha prayers of the previous day. Similarly, when Muslims in Los Angeles offer their Fajr prayers, those in India and Pakistan are offering their Maghrib or Isha prayer of the same day.
3. If it is made obligatory on all the Muslims in the world to offer their acts of worship at one and the same time for the sake of unity, such unity can never materialize (because of the time differences). It is, therefore, obvious that offering one's acts of worship at different times do not affect the concept of Muslim Unity.

What does the Muslim unity mean?

It means that all Muslims should treat each other with brotherly sympathy and affection and should not spread disorder and dissention among them. Nor should they invent new ideas foreign to the teachings of Quran and the Sunnah which may lead to division and conflict among Muslims.

It is also astonishing that the article views the celebration of Eid al-Adha on different days as being against the concept of Ummah while in the matter of celebration of Eid ai-Fitr, this concept is dispensed with. If the celebration of Eid al-Fitr on different days does not affect the concept of unity, how can it be said to harm unity in the case of Eid al-Adha.

4. It is true that Eid al-Adha falls immediately after the day of Arafat in Saudi Arabia, but it is not necessary that the Muslims in every country should follow the same dates in their respective areas. Hajj, no doubt, is tied with a particular place but the celebration of Eid al-Adha is not confined to that place alone. It is celebrated everywhere in the world and cannot be tied to the Saudi calendar.
5. The article admits that the celebration of Eid al-Adha in other countries was never linked with its celebration in Saudi Arabia throughout the past 14 centuries. This, the author's claim was because of a lack of communication facilities. With vastly improved communication today, they argued that everyone almost anywhere can find out the day of Hajj, and should celebrate Eid al-Adha based on Saudi calendar.

There is a clear admission in this argument that it is not obligatory according to Quran or the Sunnah to celebrate Eid al-Adha according to Saudi calendar. Had this been so, Muslims would have tried their best to find the exact date of Hajj in Saudi Arabia. It is not correct to say that it was not possible in those days for people living outside Saudi Arabia to know the exact date of Hajj, because this date is normally determined on the first night of Zul-Hijjah. There is a nine day period until Eid, which is more than sufficient to acquire this information. However, no jurists has ever stressed that such information be collected in order to celebrate Eid al-Adha according to Saudi dates.

Further, if the argument of the article is accepted and it is held that the real intention of Quran and Sunnah was to link the celebration of Eid al-Adha with the Saudi dates, as a mandatory provision for all Muslims in the world, it means that the Shari'ah has stressed a principle which was not practical for 1300 years. It is not against the Quranic declaration that Allah does not make a thing mandatory unless it is practical for the human beings.

If the authors argue that the celebration of Eid al-Adha was not linked with the dates in Makkah in the past but it has become a mandatory requirement of the Shari'ah now, then the question arises, who has abrogated the previous principle and on what basis? There is no provision in Quran or the Sunnah which orders the Muslims to celebrate Eid al-Adha according to their local dates up to a particular time and to link it with the dates in Makkah thereafter. Whoever considers this

and similar questions arising out of this unprecedented theory advanced in the article can appreciate its fallacy.

6. Finally, I would like to inform you that the question of sighting the moon for each lunar month including Zul-Hijjah was thoroughly discussed at the annual sessions of the Islamic Fiqh Academy (held in Jordan, October 11-16, 1986) attended by more than a hundred outstanding scholars of Shari'ah. The academy adopted the resolution recommended that all Muslim countries should determine all the lunar months including Zul-Hijjah on the same basis for both Eid al-Fitr as well as Eid al-Adha.

This resolution represents the consensus of Muslim jurists throughout the world. The proposal contained in the ISNA article, however, goes totally against this consensus.

Before parting with the subject, I would like to emphasize that such unprecedented proposals can never advance the cause of Muslim unity. Rather, they may create a new point of disunity and dissention among Muslims. Before venturing such opinions as definite "Fatwa", these should be discussed at some responsible international forum of contemporary Muslim jurists like the International Islamic Fiqh Academy in Jeddah.