



Islamic Crescent Observation for the UK

المراقبة الإسلامية للأهلة في المملكة المتحدة

إحياء السنة النبوية في رؤية الهلال - Reviving the Sunnah of Moon Sighting



When is Ramadan 1435 AH

Report by Qamar Uddin

It is well known that Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic calendar based on the orbit of the moon round the earth. The month starts with the first sighting of the crescent moon (Hilal), which appears in a different location of the earth in each month. Hence, it is not possible to fix one location or any one country on the earth to sight the youngest moon in every month.

However, the Islamic Crescent Observation for the UK (ICOUK) group attempt Hilal observations on the UK horizon in all 12 months of the year and also collect reliable/verified observation reports from other countries in the east of UK/Morocco. These reports are made available to the Muslim Scholars (Ulama) in the UK to make rapid decisions based on actual human eye sightings to fully comply with the Shariah.

Accordingly, on Thursday 29th May 2014 (29 Rajab 1435 AH) many people from throughout the UK have attempted to sight the crescent moon (Hilal) of Shaban after sunset. None of the groups were able to sight the Hilal as most places were cloudy. However, we had received reliable sighting report (*Muhaqqaq-Ruyat-Basari*) from Morocco Awqaf Ministry of positive sightings by fax. Therefore, the UK Ulama have decided that the month of Rajab 1435 AH would have 29-days and the month of Shaban 1435 AH was to start from Friday 30th May 2014, which was also the same date as the Saudi Ummul Qura calendar (by coincident).

Hence, 29th Shaban 1435 AH will be on Friday 27th June 2014 when we will be looking for the Hilal of Ramadan after sunset as per the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (*Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam*). If reliable/verified sighting reports were received from either the UK or any countries in the east of the UK/Morocco then 1st Ramadan 1435 AH may start from Saturday 28th June 2014, otherwise it will start from the next day (Sunday 29th June 2014), Insha-Allah.

Ramadan Prediction

From a scientific point of view, the Hilal of Ramadan 1435 AH will not be possible to be sighted anywhere in the UK or in the east on 27th June 2014 (after sunset) and hence the month of Shaban 1435 AH is likely to complete 30 days. The Ramadan moon will be born on Friday 27th June 2014 at 08:08 GMT (New Moon Conjunction). It will be 12 hours old at London sunset, but moonset will be 20 minutes before sunset, hence it will not be possible to be sighted anywhere in the UK. In Makkah, the moon will be 8 hours old and it will set 1 minute after sunset. However, it will not be possible to be sighted after Makkah sunset, as the moon will be too close to the horizon (0.03 deg altitude) and the sun (6 deg elongation). Also, the phase of the moon will be so thin (0.3% illuminated) that it will be beyond the resolution of the human eye to detect it! Furthermore, in most of Saudi Arabia, the moon will set before the sun, making it impossible to sight anywhere else.

“1st Ramadan 1435 AH in the UK is most likely to be on Sunday 29th June 2014, Insha-Allah”

The predicted crescent visibility map for Ramadan 1435 AH [see Fig. 1] clearly shows that the moon will not be possible to be sighted anywhere in the east of UK/Morocco on the evening of 27th June 2014. The red shaded area on top of the visibility map shows the moon will set before the sunset. Also, unlike previous years, it may not be possible to sight it by standard telescopes from South America, even if the weather was perfect! Therefore, 1st Ramadan 1435 AH in the UK is most likely to be on Sunday 29th June 2014 (i.e. after sunset on 28th June 2014), Insha-Allah.

First visibility lunar crescent for Ramaḍān 1435 AH

Global visibility map for 27 June 2014 [Friday]
Day of luni-solar conjunction

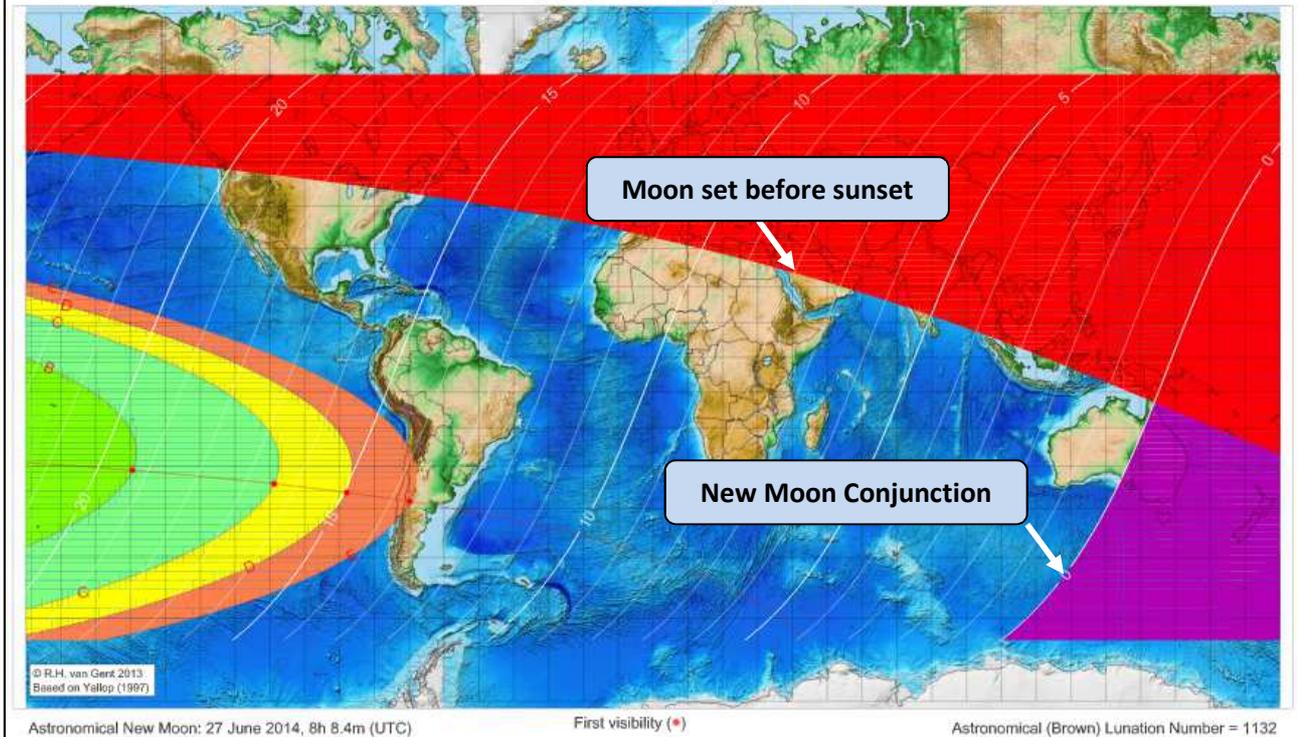


Fig.1 Visibility Map for Ramadan 1435 AH

Report from Saudi Arabia

It is well known that Saudi Arabia uses a pre-calculated calendar called the “Ummul Qura” for all civil/administrative purposes. The Ummul Qura calendar is based on the fact that if the moon set is after sunset on the 29th day of the lunar month (after New Moon Conjunction) then the next day is the 1st of the month. On 27th June 2014, which will be 29th Shaban 1435, the 8 hours old moon will set 1 minute after the sun in Makkah, so the Ummul Qura calendar will start Ramadan from 28th June 2014. What is interesting is that in most of Saudi Arabia as well as in many other Middle Eastern countries, the moon will set before (or with) the sun on that date, even though it will set 1 minute after the sun in Makkah (see Visibility Map in Fig.1). That means it will be impossible to sight the Hilal by the human eye anywhere in Saudi Arabia (or any other parts of the world) on 27th June 2014. This may prove that the Ummul Qura calendar does not match the visibility of the moon.

There is an International moon sighting organisation called, “Islamic Crescent Observation Project” (ICOP), which has over 400 members from around the world, including many Saudi Hilal Committee members. We understand from these ICOP members that there are about 10 Hilal Committees in Saudi Arabia (since 1429 AH/2008 AD) who look for the Hilal on the 29th day of the Ummul Qura calendar date every month and report their result to the Supreme Court. What is not very well known is the fact that, none of the Hilal Committees have ever been able to sight the Hilal on the 29th day of the Ummul Qura date, even with telescope, as will be the case on 27th June 2014. According to these ICOP members in Saudi Arabia, the false sighting claims usually come from a few people outside the Hilal Committees near Riyadh (Shaqra and Sudair), which are usually accepted by the court. The court only makes sighting based announcements during Ramadan/Eids, but follows the pre-calculated Ummul Qura calendar in all other months.

“None of the Hilal Committees have ever been able to sight the Hilal on the 29th day of the Ummul Qura calendar date”

A recent visit to Saudi Arabia by the author (Qamar Uddin) revealed that the purpose of the monthly observations by the official Hilal Committees was to collect sufficient data for future analysis, such as to establish suitable locations for building future observatories, but not for making any monthly announcements other than for Ramadan and two Eids. Therefore, any individuals or organisations that follow the civil calendar of Saudi Arabia throughout the year are effectively following the pre-calculated Ummul Qura calendar based on moon set after sunset following New Moon Conjunction. This criteria is also known to some people as a “New Moon Theory” calendar, as it is not based on the possibility of actual sightings!

Our request to the Saudi Supreme Court would be to reject all sighting claims if made by a few people on 27th June 2014, unless there was such a large number that could not have collectively organised a false claim. This requirement of a large number or group sighting is known in classical books of Jurisprudence as “Jamme Ghafir”, to counter the problem of erroneous/false sighting claims. Alternatively, if the Ummul Qura Calendar was changed to a Predicted Crescent Visibility (*Imkan-e-Ruyat*) formula as explained in our ICOUK website Petition, then the indirect bias towards false sighting claims could be minimised. It is unacceptable that false sighting claims of a few people near Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) should mislead millions of people in the same country and around the world, year after year. May Allah protect us!

Report from other countries

If there is a difference in Hilal sighting reports between Saudi Arabia and other nearby countries, then unfortunately there will be a **split** in UK Muslim communities for the start of Ramadan, since some large UK mosques (e.g. Regents Park & East London) strictly follow Saudi announcements only. Again, the outlook for Eid-ul-Fitr looks similar, since moonset will be after sunset in Makkah on 27th July 2014, so Saudi Arabia is likely to end Ramadan on that evening, even though none of the other countries east of UK/Morocco will be able to sight the Hilal on that evening [see Visibility Map in Fig. 2]. Hence, Eid-ul-Fitr is expected to be divided again on Monday 28th July 2014 for those following Saudi Arabia and on Tuesday 29th July 2014 for those following actual/ verified moon sighting reports (*Muhaqqaq-Ruyat-Basari*) such as Wifaqul Ulama. Unfortunately, this type of chaos/ divisions in the UK Muslim communities is likely to continue every year until our scholars are united.

Report by Email/SMS

For regular moon sighting reports and discussions from the UK and around the world, please join our group of from the ICOUK website (www.moonsighting.org.uk). We pray to Allah Almighty to unite all the Muslims of the UK on a Shariah compliant moon sighting criteria based on evidence and not emotions (Ameen).

[Dated: 17 June 2014]

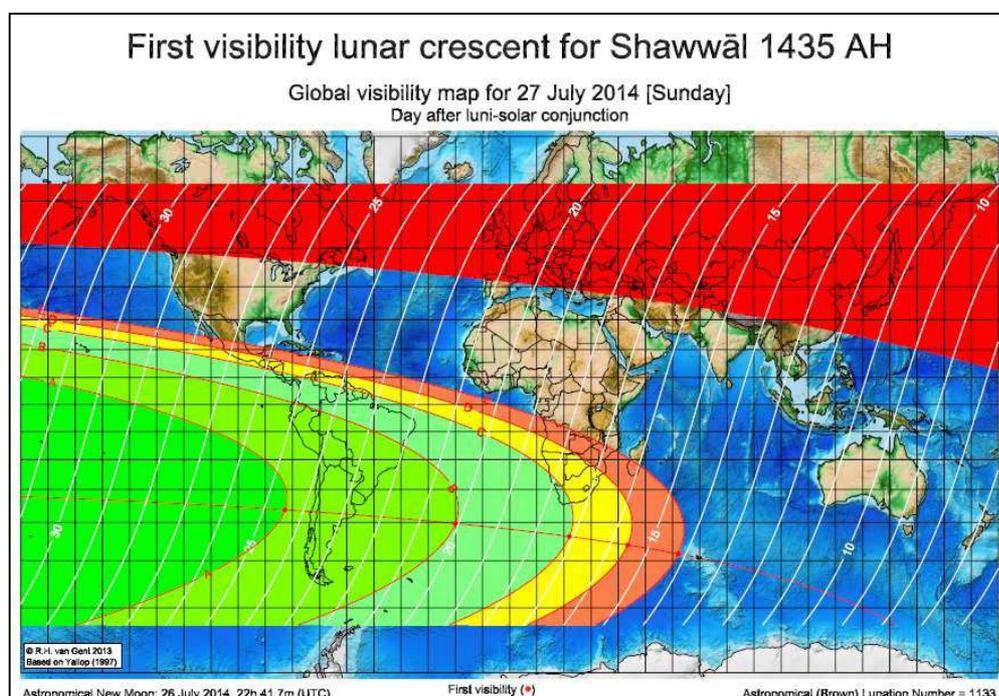


Fig.2 Visibility Map for Shawwal 1435 AH (Eid-ul Fitr)