Conferences/Seminars

Regional Seminar And Workshop On The International Islamic Calendar

Shawwal 21-24, 1408/June 7-10, 1988

The Pulau Penang Resolution On The International Islamic Calendar

Praise be to Allah (SWT), Lord of the worlds. Peace and benediction be on His Prophet Muhammad, his family, Companions and followers.

Heading the Commandments of Allah (SWT) in the Qur'an is: "Verily in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those who use their intellect; those who reflect upon God while standing, sitting and reclining and ponder on the creation of the heavens and the earth saying: 'O my Lord You have not created all these in vain. Glory be to You, save us from the fire'".

From *Shawwal 21-24, 1408*/June 7-10, 1988, the Universiti Sains Malaysia hosted a Regional Seminar and Workshop on the International Islamic Calendar attended by 100 Muslim scientists, religious scholars (*Ulamā'*), community leaders and government officials concerned with Islamic Affairs from 25 different countries and international Islamic organizations. The seminar and workshop was held with the cooperation of the International Institute of Islamic Thought, the Islamic Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia, the Council of Islamic Affairs of Penang, the Malaysian Airlines System, the Islamic Council of Europe, the International Centre for Theoretical Physics, the Third World Academy of Sciences and the Islamic Economic Development Foundation of Malaysia.

The Seminar was declared opened by Y.B. Datuk Dr. Mohammad Yusuf Noor, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, whose speech was unanimously adopted as a conference document. The Seminar received country reports from Thailand, Philippines, Fiji, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Australia, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Maldives and Singapore. The country reports discussed the calendrical practices in various countries in the region and problems faced in determining important Islamic dates. Subregional discussions were held regarding future planning in respect of the Islamic Lunar Calendar. Special workshops were held for Muslim scholars (*'Ulamā'*) and community leaders regarding the implementation of a scientific lunar calendar for the Muslims in the region and the problems and difficulties in the implementation

of a common system for the region. Dr. Mohammad Ilyas from the Universiti Sains Malaysia delivered the keynote address during the opening session as well as a paper entitled "Lunar Visibility and International Lunar Date Lines for the International Lunar Calendar" which was followed by a detailed and intensive discussion. The closing speech of the Seminar was delivered by the Vice-Chancellor of the Universiti Sains Malaysia, Y. Bhg. Datuk Hj. Musa Mohamad who also spoke at the opening ceremony.

On the first day of the Seminar, the participants witnessed the Governor of Penang lay the foundation stone for the State Astronomical Centre of Pantai Acheh. Prof. Bambang Hidayat, the Director of the Bosscha Observatory, Indonesia gave a public lecture entitled "The Fascinating Universe" on the second day of the Seminar.

After comprehensively discussing the concepts, scientific calculations and the future program for the Islamic Calendar (as well as previous conferences and seminars held on the same topic both in workshops and plenary sessions), the participants at the Plenary Session held on *Shawwal 24, 1408*/June 10, 1988 unanimously agreed on the following recommendations and resolutions as "The Pulau Penang Resolution on the Islamic Calendar".

1. Due to certain inadequacies in the criteria adopted by the Commission on the Unified Hijri Calendar in 1978 in Istanbul, the Seminar calls for the modification of these criteria by the Muslim world considering the greater scientific precision of the Criteria for Expected Lunar Visibility developed by Dr. Mohammad Ilyas (1984; 1988).* The Seminar also requests that this resolution be brought to the attention of the Islamic Calendar Commission.
2. **Recommends** that the Muslim world in general, and the Muslims of the Asia-Pacific region in particular, adopt the Ilyas Criteria of Expected Visibility (1988) for a general purpose calendar for the Ummah and that Muslim scientists continually carry out further research in order to refine these criteria to further increase their level of accuracy.
3. **Calls** upon the Muslim Ummah in general, and the Muslims of this region in particular, to recognize the significance of an International Lunar Date Line (which has now been recognized by the International Astronomical Union) for the determination of Islamic dates, and particularly the commencement of Islamic months.
4. **Calls** upon Muslim governments, religious scholars and communities to work towards unified criteria for expected

visibility and carry out further research to refine the present criteria developed by Dr. Mohammad Ilyas.

5. **Calls** upon Muslim governments and communities to provide opportunities for Muslim scientists to discuss with Islamic scholars (the *'Ulamā'*) the latest scientific findings regarding the expected visibility of the moon. In particular it calls upon the Islamic Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia, together with the Universiti Sains Malaysia to hold discussions on this topic with the religious scholars (*'Ulamā'*), including university lecturers, teachers, officers of the departments of religious affairs and other *'Ulamā'*. In other countries, similar discussions should also be held.

6. **Calls** upon the participants in this seminar to set up with their respective institutions and organizations a network to work towards gaining the acceptance by the Muslim community of the expected visibility criteria developed over the past 15 years and providing feedback regarding physical verification of the expected visibility in their respective countries. Such a network should be utilized to exchange information and latest developments in the field of Islamic calendrical science.

7. **Congratulates** and expresses the gratitude of the participants in the seminar to the State Government of Penang; for its bold step in establishing and Islamic Astronomical Centre at Pantai Acheh, Penang; and calls for the enhancement of cooperation and coordination between the University Sains Malaysia and the Islamic Astronomical Centre in order to maximize the benefits to the Muslim Ummah. It further requests the Islamic Astronomical Centre to provide technical assistance and coordination services for Muslims in this region.

8. **Records** its appreciation of the support given by Universiti Sains Malaysia for the International Islamic Calendar Project becoming the first modern institution in the world taking an active interest in the application of astronomical research to the problems of the Islamic calendar. The seminar also requests the Universiti Sains Malaysia to produce and disseminate, as soon as possible, a five-year Islamic Lunar Calendar for the region to be reviewed at the end of the period with feedback from actual sighting.

9. **Requests** international Islamic organizations to contribute towards the funding of the International Islamic Calendar Project, further support the revival and development of Islamic astronomy, and related sciences and provide facilities and funding for the training of appropriate personnel.

10. **Calls** upon the Regional Islamic Da'wah Council of South East Asia and the Pacific (RISEAP) together with the Universiti Sains Malaysia and Muslim organizations and institutions in the region to assist in coordinating efforts to implement an International Islamic Lunar Calendar in the region. They are also called upon to produce, in various languages, a videotape and a book as well as other audio-visual material to educate the Muslim community about the Islamic system of time, the astronomy of Islamic times and the latest developments in Islamic calendrical science. It further calls upon RISEAP to disseminate the proceedings of this Seminar to Muslim minorities in the region.

11. **Requests** the Islamic Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia to undertake the publication, in English, Arabic and other languages, of the proceedings and resolutions of this Seminar. It suggests that the Arabic translation should be undertaken by scientists familiar with the field.

12. **Calls** on all interested parties to make efforts to hold a regional conference regarding the Islamic calendar on a regular basis and further calls for the holding of an International Conference on the Islamic Lunar Calendar every five years.

13. **Suggests** to Muslim governments and communities in the region that the following criteria, as published by Ilyas (1984), should be adopted as a first step for acceptable visibility of the new moon:

14. **Calls** on Muslim governments and communities to ensure the expected visibility of the moon each month which should be published together with the lunar date line in the mass media and that Muslims should be encouraged to report such sightings to the appropriate authorities or community organizations with the aim of encouraging scientific awareness and mass participation in moon sighting.

15. **Calls** upon all those involved in sighting the moon to work

out a uniform system of verification of sighting the moon based on the expected visibility criteria as follows:

a. Name, age, occupation, address.
b. Exactly where the observation was made?
c. How good is your eyesight, glasses, etc.?
d. Have you ever tried to sight the new crescent before? How often did you succeed? Or failed?
e. Did you use any optical aids (binoculars, telescope)? Describe.
f. At what time did you **see** the **sun** set?
g. At what time did you first see the moon?
h. Who was with you? Did they see it?
i. How high above the horizon was the crescent moon when you first saw it? (Measure in finger-widths at arm's length).
j. To which side of the point along the horizon where the sun set was the moon sighted—to the Right (North) or Left (South)?
k. How far to the Right or Left of the sunset point was the moon? (Use your fist at arm's length as a measuring stick).
l. Describe the sky (i.e., cloudy, hazy, clear, thin, cloudy, etc).
m. Describe the color of the sky when you first saw the moon (i.e. blue, white, pink, blue-white, grey, etc.).
n. What direction were the "horns" of the moon pointing? (Towards the horizon, away from the horizon, away from the sunset point, etc.?)
o. Draw the crescent as you saw it.

Sunset Point

_____ · _____ Horizon

p. Describe the moon's color (silver, yellow, copper, etc.)
q. At what local time did the moonset take place?

16. **Recommends** that countries to the geographic east of the Lunar Date Line should ***not*** follow the sighting of countries to the geographic west.
17. **Requests** Muslims to hold meetings from time to time to

discuss the internationalization of the Islamic Lunar Calendar in individual and adjoining countries.

18. **Took** note of the Islamic Scholars'(*'Ulamā'*) agreement that the astronomical calculation of expected visibility of the new moon should be used as an aid to sighting. Further, the seminar agrees that the expected visibility criterion is the best possible aid to sighting, and a method which *should*, in due course, lead to a convergence of the *rukyah* and *hisab* methods.
19. **Extends** its thanks to the Universiti Sains Malaysia and the various sponsors for their valuable support on this important seminar.
20. Expresses its gratitude for the opening speech of Y. B. Datuk Dr. Mohd Yusuf Noor, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department for his opening speech and his Department's support of this Seminar and the International Islamic Calendar Project.

REFERENCE

*M. Ilyas (1984), *A Modern Guide to Astronomical Calculations of Islamic Calendar, Times and Qiblah* (Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing); M. Ilyas (1988), in *The Journal of Astronomy and Astrophysics*, vol. 2020.

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