

Can the Sighting of the New Moon be Confirmed via a Telephone Call

Q: Salaah-179: The new moon to signal the beginning of Ramadhaan could not be sighted in Delhi last year because the sky was not clear. People however fasted because of news that came via a telephone call from Lucknow. This was printed in the Jamiah newsletter, whereas to this day Ulema have never relied on the news coming from a telephone call because it is regarded as coming from behind a veil. They have always maintained that the witness must be present. Please clarify.

Answer: There is no doubt about the fact that the testimony of a person behind a veil is not accepted and the witness needs to be present. However, this is a case of information and not testimony. If the sky is not clear and a reliable man or woman informs the Qaadhi that s/he has seen the moon, the Qaadhi may issue the decree for Taraaweih and fasting to commence if he feels satisfied with the information. Raddul Mukhtaar (Vol.2 Pg.123) states that when there is cloud in the sky, the information of a man saying that he had seen the new moon will be accepted even without him giving formal testimony because the case is one of information and not testimony.

The situation of Delhi was the same. Because there were clouds about, the moon could not be sighted and although the people had heard on radio that the moon had been sighted elsewhere, they were uncertain. However, the Ulema were convinced about it only when a reliable Aalim from Lucknow telephoned and they recognised his voice. It was therefore correct for them to issue the instruction for fasting to begin. This situation is not new because Hakeemul Ummah Hadhrat Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi RAH. issued the same Fatwa forty years ago:

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