

Why it is not permissible to follow Hizbul Ulama's *suhoor* and *fajr* times

Mufti Sajid Patel, July 2012, London (muftisajid@hotmail.co.uk)

For the past 20 years, a number of *masaajid* in Lancashire and London (especially Newham) have been following a *salah* timetable devised by Hizbul Ulama allegedly based on a series of “observations” (*mushahadah*) in Blackburn in 1988. On the basis of these “observations”, Hizbul Ulama devised a set of times for all *masaajid* in the UK.

However, after carefully studying the data, senior *muftiyaan-e-kiraam* in the UK and abroad have stated that it is not permissible to follow these times. They have condemned the timetable as unreliable and the result of a lack of understanding, expertise and experience. Hizbul Ulama’s times are completely different from many observations performed by *ulama* in the UK and around the world; are inconsistent with scholarly consensus on the subject throughout the history of Islam; and further do not even match Hizbul Ulama’s own “observations”.

In this leaflet we will explore a few of these errors. We will categorically show that Hizbul Ulama’s timetable does not match their own “observations”. These and other inconsistencies are not a simple matter of difference of opinion or *ijtihad*, but are fundamental errors which render the timetable completely void.

Let us first define *fajr*. There are two opinions for the start of *fajr*:

1) First light. This is the time the first glimpse of light is seen. The *fuqaha* have overwhelmingly preferred this view.

2) *Tabayyun*. This is the time when white light has spread across the horizon. Very few *fuqaha* have preferred this view.

There is no third opinion for *fajr*.

Hizbul Ulama’s own observations don’t match their timetable

Hizbul Ulama’s published timetable does not match their own “observations” of first light and *tabayyun*.

Look at these examples of “observations” in May (see Figures 1 and 2):

May 15th

Observed first light to sunrise: 1h 55m
Observed *tabayyun* to sunrise: 1h 33m
Time given to *masaajid*: 1h 48 min

May 21st

Observed first light to sunrise: 2h 22m
Observed *tabayyun* to sunrise: 1h 32m
Time given to *masaajid*: 1h 51 min

May 25th

Observed first light to sunrise: 2h 24m
Observed *tabayyun* to sunrise: 1h 44m
Time given to *masaajid*: 1h 54 min

Here neither first light or *tabayyun* are given to *masaajid* to use for *fajr* but rather a completely random time. This is not the time of *fajr* according to any jurist or opinion in any of the four schools of thought.

This trend continues. In June Hizbul Ulama only managed two observations:

June 6th

Observed first light to sunrise: 2h 58 m
Observed *tabayyun* to sunrise: 1h 43 m
Time given to *masaajid*: 2h

June 13th

First light to sunrise not seen
Observed *tabayyun* to sunrise: 1h 54m
Time given to *masaajid*: 2h 4min

In the month of July Hizbul Ulama did not manage any successful observations (as with January).

Only two successful observations were managed in August (see Figures 1 and 2):

August 7th

Observed first light to sunrise: 1h 55 m

Observed *tabayyun* to sunrise: 1h 23 m

Time given to *masaajid*: 1h 43m

August 16th

Observed first light to sunrise: 1h 54m

Observed *tabayyun* to sunrise: 1h 24m

Time given to *masaajid*: 1h 40min

In total, Hizbul Ulama managed 21 successful observations. Of these only 11 have been published with dates.

Check August 7th and 16th on your Ramadhan timetable against the two “observations” above. You will see that it is not according to what Hizbul Ulama “observed”.

Almighty Allah tells us in the Quran, “Eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct to you from the black thread”. (surah Al-Baqarah 2:187)

For August 16th, Hizbul Ulama say they “observed” the white thread of dawn becoming distinct from the black thread at 1 hour 54 minutes before sunrise, but then went on to recommend that people carry on eating for another (completely random) 14 minutes! With this, Hizbul Ulama have through a lack of understanding and expertise in this field, invented something new which has never before been approved by any jurist in the history of our religion.

Hizbul Ulama didn't honour their agreement to other ulama

Hizbul Ulama claim that their timetable was agreed by *ulama* at a meeting in Blackburn in 1988. They fail however to mention that many *ulama* subsequently retracted their support and that the method of construction they described to the *ulama* was not used.

In their book “Fajr and Isha Times and Twilight” (p112-113) they write: “At this meeting the following was agreed: For May and June, *fajr* beginning time be set at the recorded time of ‘*tabayyun*’ as is permitted by *muftiyan-e-kiram*.”

This shows that Hizbul Ulama had agreed to produce a timetable for May and June in which *fajr* was according to “*tabayyun*”. However, we’ve seen that this was not honoured. In May and June, neither *tabayyun* or first light was used.

Phasing all year round

Hizbul Ulama explain the construction of their timetable in three parts: 1) In summer they claim to use *tabayyun*; 2) in winter they claim to use first light; and 3) for some days between summer and winter they claim to “phase” between first light and *tabayyun*.

In their 2011 article, “Why Our Fasting Times Are Not Wrong,” they write: “We have used first light observed time for most months except summer where we have used *tabayyun* times ... Times will need to be phased to get from one to the other. This method results in some times that are ‘in between’ times.”

We have clearly shown that this is categorically not true. None of their summer times are according to *tabayyun* and none of their winter times are according to first light. They are “phasing” all year round and claim that this is “within *hudoode shariah*”.

Is the Hizbul Ulama timetable really within hudoode shariah?

No. Hizbul Ulama have claimed that despite their timetable not matching their own observations of first light or *tabayyun*, it is “within *hudoode shariah*” (acceptable limits). They say that it is justified by the practise of *sahaba*, claiming that: “We should learn from *sahaba* like Hadrat Abu Bakr and Hadrat Ali *radi-allahu anhum* who are reported to eat *suhur* till almost the sun was going to come out.” (Why Our Fasting Times Are Not Wrong, 2011)

Figure 1: The individual raw "observations" published by Hizbul Ulama

مشاہدہ کے مطابق وقت فجر
ہیک برن شہر - لنکاشائر - یو کے

تاریخ	پہلی روشنی	صبح	تاریخ	پہلی روشنی	صبح	تاریخ	پہلی روشنی	صبح	تاریخ	پہلی روشنی	صبح
۲ مئی	X	X	۱۰ مئی	۱-۲۱	۲-۵۲	۱۰ مئی	۱-۲۲	۲-۵۲	۱۰ مئی	۱-۲۱	۲-۵۲
۲ مئی	X	X	۱۱ مئی	۱-۵۱	۲-۲۵	۱۱ مئی	۱-۲۲	۲-۲۳	۱۱ مئی	۱-۲۱	۲-۲۳
۱۰ مئی	X	X	۱۲ مئی	۱-۵۵	۲-۲۳	۱۲ مئی	۱-۲۲	۲-۲۱	۱۲ مئی	۱-۲۱	۲-۲۸
۱۵ مئی	X	X	۱۳ مئی	۱-۳۳	۲-۳۴	۱۳ مئی	۱-۵۵	۲-۱۲	۱۳ مئی	X	X
۲۰ مئی	X	X	۱۴ مئی	۲-۱۴	۲-۲۵	۱۴ مئی	۱-۵۸	۲-۳	۱۴ مئی	X	X
۲۱ مئی	X	X	۱۵ مئی	۱-۲۲	۲-۲۸	۱۵ مئی	۱-۵۹	۲-۱	۱۵ مئی	X	X
۲۵ مئی	X	X	۱۶ مئی	۱-۲۲	۲-۱۰	۱۶ مئی	۲-۱۰	۲-۲	۱۶ مئی	X	X
۶ جون	X	X	۱۷ مئی	۱-۲۳	۲-۰	۱۷ مئی	۲-۵۸	۲-۲۱	۱۷ مئی	X	X
۱۲ جون	X	X	۱۸ مئی	۱-۵۲	۲-۲۵	۱۸ مئی	۲-۳۰	۲-۹	۱۸ مئی	X	X

جولائی کے مہینہ میں مشاہدہ نہیں کیوں کہ نہ ہوگا

تاریخ	پہلی روشنی	صبح	تاریخ	پہلی روشنی	صبح	تاریخ	پہلی روشنی	صبح
۴ اگست	۱-۲۳	۲-۱۵	۱۵ اگست	۱-۵۵	۲-۳۸	۱۵ اگست	۱-۲۰	۲-۵۲
۱۶ اگست	۱-۲۲	۲-۲۵	۱۶ اگست	۱-۵۲	۲-۵۵	۱۶ اگست	۱-۲۲	۲-۱۶

"Observed" first light to sunrise times

"Observed" tabayyun to sunrise times

"Observation" date

An example:
On May 21st Hizbul Ulama "observed" the time between first light and sunrise as 2h 22m, and the time between *tabayyun* and sunrise as 1h 32m. However a time of 1h 51m was given to *masajid*.

An example:
On August 16 Hizbul Ulama "observed" the time between first light and sunrise as 1h 54m, and the time between *tabayyun* and sunrise as 1h 24m. However a time of 1h 40m was given to *masajid*.

TIME TABLE OF SUBHA SADIQ IN UK

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
1	1-40	1-40	1-40	1-35	1-41	1-57	1-59	1-45	1-35	1-31	1-40	1-45
2	-	-	-	-	-	1-58	1-58	-	-	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	1-42	-	-	1-44	-	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	-	-	1-59	1-57	-	-	-	1-41	-
5	-	-	-	-	1-43	-	-	1-43	-	1-32	-	-
6	-	-	-	-	-	2-00	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	1-44	-	1-56	-	-	-	1-42	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	2-01	-	1-42	-	1-33	-	-
9	-	-	-	-	1-45	-	1-55	-	-	-	-	-
10	-	-	-	-	-	2-02	-	-	-	-	1-43	-
11	-	-	-	-	1-46	-	-	1-41	-	1-34	-	-
12	-	-	-	-	-	2-03	1-54	-	-	-	-	-
13	-	-	-	-	1-47	2-04	-	-	-	-	1-44	-
14	-	-	-	-	-	-	1-53	1-40	-	1-35	-	-
15	-	-	-	-	1-48	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1-34	-	1-45	1-44
17	-	-	-	-	1-49	-	1-52	1-39	-	1-36	-	-
18	-	-	-	1-36	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	-	-	-	-	1-50	-	1-51	-	1-33	-	-	-
20	-	-	1-39	-	-	2-03	-	1-38	-	-	-	1-43
21	-	-	-	1-37	1-51	-	-	-	-	1-37	-	-
22	-	-	1-38	-	-	-	1-50	-	1-32	-	-	-
23	-	-	-	-	1-52	2-02	-	1-37	-	1-38	-	-
24	-	-	-	1-38	1-53	-	1-49	-	-	-	-	-
25	-	-	-	-	1-54	-	-	-	1-31	-	-	-
26	-	-	1-37	-	-	2-01	1-48	1-36	-	1-39	-	1-41
27	-	-	-	1-39	1-55	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
28	-	-	1-36	-	-	2-00	1-47	-	1-30	-	-	-
29	-	-	-	-	1-56	-	-	1-35	-	1-40	-	1-40
30	-	-	-	1-40	-	-	1-46	-	-	-	-	-
31	-	-	1-35	-	1-57	1-59	-	-	-	-	-	-

Times given to *masajid* in the UK

Figure 2: The published times given by Hizbul Ulama to *masajid*

Source: Hizbul Ulama

Imam Abu Bakr ArRazi states that this practise is not established (Umdatul Qaari, v10 p427). Moulana Yusuf Binnori also clarifies this in Marifus Sunan (v5 p367). Quoting Imam Tahawi, he explains that this practice was abrogated when the verse of the Quran detailing the time of *suhur* was revealed. There is no flexibility in eating *suhur* until the sun almost comes up or at any time other than first light (strong opinion) or *tabayyun* (very weak opinion). There is consensus on this.

The actual “observations” were also flawed

Hizbul Ulama have not only made major errors in the construction of their timetable, but they also fell short in making proper “observations” in the first place.

They claim that, “the *ulama* who carried out the *mushahadah* were highly knowledgeable and well respected and knew what they were doing.” (Why Our Fasting Times Are Not Wrong, 2011)

Moulana Hanif Dudhwala (Blackburn) managed to interview two of these observers. Qari Gulam Mohammad Patel explained that he “didn’t know anything about *subah sadik* or *shafaq*.” Another observer, Moulana Ahmed Sidat, explained that he “really did not know what was going on.”

A *fatwa* issued by Darul Uloom Karachi and signed by Mufti Taqi Uthmani, also comments on the observations thus: “these errors (in the Hizbul Ulama UK times) came about due to a lack of knowledge with regards to *subh-sadiq*.” (13/6/1411). A *fatwa* against the use of the Hizbul Ulama timetable was also issued by Mufti Ismail Barkodrawi (chief *mufti*, Darul Uloom Kanthaaria).

Other published observations by other groups of *ulama* in the same area also confirm that the “observations” of Hizbul Ulama are mistaken and likely the result of a lack of understanding, expertise and experience.

Did Mufti Mahmood Hasan Gangohi give leeway to follow the Hizbul Ulama timetable?

No. The opposite is true. Mufti Mahmood Hasan Gangohi, in a meeting with *ulama* in the UK, set *fajr* time at 18°. He stated that times which go as low as 12° are “completely wrong.” (Note: Hizbul Ulama’s summer times go as low as 12°.)

What about Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi?

No. The *fatwa* in Imdadul Fatawa (v1 p100), referenced (wrongly) by Hizbul Ulama in defense of their work, is actually about observing moonset times on days in which moonset corresponds with *subh-sadiq* in Thaana Bahwan. Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi has never allowed constructing a timetable by making random observations and arbitrarily interpolating them in a way that the original “observations” do not remain. Moreover, in Imdadul Fatawa (v1 p113) he recommends 18° *fajr* to a questioner from Scotland.

So which timetable should I follow?

Ulama around the world have, after innumerable observations, said that *fajr* enters when the sun is 18° below the horizon. Mufti Taqi Uthmani has said in a *fatwa* published on al-balagh.net that, “After a good deal of research and continuing observation my father Mufti Muhammad Shafi as well as other 99% of the *ulama* in Pakistan and India are unanimous on the point that the time of *isha* and *fajr* begins when the sun is 18° below the horizon.”

In the UK, 18° *fajr* is used in almost all the *masjid* in Leicester, Batley, and Dewsbury. It is used by senior *ulama* like Mufti Sacha, Mufti Shabbir (Darul Uloom Bury), Mufti Ismail Kacholwi (Bradford), and Maulana Saleem Dhorat (Leicester).

This is not only a contemporary opinion but one which has been the staple of scholars for as long as we can verify.

Mufti Shafi Uthmani, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi, Maulana Khaleel Ahmed Sahaaranpuri, Sheikh ul Hind, Mufti Mahmood Hasan Gangohi, Allamah Shami and many others have set *fajr* at 18°.