



Warriors for Peace

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## **Assalam' alaikum. Peace be with you.**



Ramadan رمضان is a Muslim religious observance that takes place during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, when the Qur'an was revealed. The name "Ramadan" is taken from the name of this month; the word itself derived from an Arabic word for intense heat, scorched ground, and shortness of rations. It is considered the most venerated and blessed month of the Islamic year. Prayers, *sawm* (fasting), charity, and self-accountability are especially stressed at this time; religious observances associated with Ramadan are kept throughout the month.

Laylat al-Qadr, which falls during the last third, commemorates the revelation of the first verses of the Qur'an and is considered the most holy night of the year. Ramadan ends with the holiday Eid ul-Fitr, on which feasts are held. During the month following Ramadan, called Shawaal, Muslims are encouraged to fast for a further six days.

### **Timing**

The Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar, and months begin when the first crescent of a new moon is sighted. Since the Islamic lunar calendar year is 11 to 12 days shorter than the solar year, Ramadan migrates through the seasons. In 2007 (1428 AH), Ramadan lasts from September 13 to October 13 and October 12 in Saudi Arabia.

The ill and travelers may substitute other days to perform their Ramadan obligations. Children, the elderly and pregnant women are viewed as excused. Menstruating women also make up the days missed, usually in Shawwal.

### **Practices during Ramadan**

#### **Fasting**

The most prominent event of this month is the daytime fasting (*sawm*) practiced by most observant Muslims. Every day during the month of Ramadan,

Muslims around the world get up before dawn to eat (sahur) and perform their fajr prayer. They break their fast when the fourth prayer of the day, Maghrib (sunset), is due.

Sultan Ahmet Mosque, Istanbul in Ramadan (the writing with lights called *mahya*)

During Ramadan, Muslims are also expected to put more effort into following the teachings of Islam as well as refraining from lying, stealing, anger, envy, greed, lust, sarcastic retorts, backbiting, and gossip. Obscene and irreligious sights and sounds are to be avoided; sexual activities during fasting hours are also forbidden. Purity of both thought and action is important. The fast is intended to be an exacting act of deep personal worship in which Muslims seek a raised level of closeness to God. The act of fasting is said to redirect the heart away from worldly activities, its purpose being to cleanse the inner soul and free it from harm. Properly observing the fast is supposed to induce a comfortable feeling of peace and calm. It also allows Muslims to practice self-discipline, sacrifice, and sympathy for those who are less fortunate, intended to make Muslims more generous and charitable.

### **Prayer and reading of the Qur'an**

Ramadan Lanterns, Cairo

In addition to fasting, Muslims are encouraged to read the entire Qur'an.

Sunni Muslims tend to perform the recitation of the entire Qur'an by means of special prayers, called Tarawih, which are held in the mosques every night of the month, during which a whole section of the Qur'an ('Juz', which is 1/30 of the Qur'an) is recited, so that by the end of the month the entire Qur'an has been completed. Tarawih is an Arabic phrase referring to those extra prayers. This prayer is performed after salah of Isha'a, but before the Wit'r Rakat.

Muslims also pay Zakaat (only applicable if one can afford it) during the month. For those who qualify to pay Zakaat, as per the Islamic 'Nisab' (that is those whose wealth exceeds their necessities), have to pay 2.5% of the leftover of their wealth earned in that Islamic calendar year. Although Zakaat can be paid any time of the year, it has to be calculated on a year to year basis, and many Muslims use Ramadan as the month for calculation and disbursement.

Ramadan is also a time when Muslims are supposed to slow down from their worldly affairs and focus on self reformation, spiritual cleansing and enlightenment and establish the link between the God almighty and themselves by prayer, supplication, charity and showing good deeds, kindness and helping others.

Since it is a festival of giving and sharing, Muslims prepare special foods and buy gifts for their family and friends and for giving to the poor and needy who cannot afford it.

It is a festival time where Muslims buy new clothes, shoes, jewelery, other items of need, prepare special foods, invite people for Iftar (meal and snacks commemorating the breaking of Fast).

In many Muslim and non Muslim countries with large Muslim populations, markets close down in the evening to enable people to perform prayer, Iftar (break fast) and then re-open in the night, and stay open for a good part of night. Muslims can be seen shopping, eating, and spending time with their friends and family during the evening hours.

## Events during and after Ramadan

Laylat al-Qadr رَدَقِلَا ذَلِيل (also known as Shab-e-Qadr in Farsi), literally the "Night of Decree or Night of Measures", is the anniversary of two very important dates in Islam that occurred in the month of Ramadan. Muslims believe that it was the night of the Laylat al-Qadr that the Quran's first verse was revealed. The exact night of the Laylat al-Qadr is only known to God and the Muhammed but he chose to keep it to himself so that muslims won't pray only that night. That is why Muhammad indicated that it was one of the last ten odd nights of Ramadan.

### Eid Ul-Fitr meal, Malaysia

The Islamic holiday of Eid ul-Fitr رَطْفِلَا دِيْع marks the end of the fasting period of Ramadan and the first day of the following month, after another new moon has been sighted. The Eid falls after 29 or 30 days of fasting, as per the lunar sighting. Eid ul-Fitr means the Festival of Breaking the Fast, a special celebration is made. Food is donated to the poor ('Zakat al-Fitr'), everyone puts on their best, preferably new, clothes, and communal prayers are held in the early morning, followed by feasting and visiting relatives and friends. The prayer is two rakaahs only, and it is an optional prayer as opposed to the compulsory 5 daily prayers. According to one current school of thought (Ankaboot), it is suggested that North American Muslims arrange their work-schedule for Eid by requesting the two most likely days of Eid as Holidays or simply as days off from work. This allows for quality family time, and is akin to the Christian/North American tradition of taking Christmas and Christmas eve off as holidays. This also allows for time off to celebrate the Eid prayer at a mosque and with family. The fast always ends after 29 or 30 days of fasting, and thus the request would be for the 29th and 30th day after the start of the fast.

Muslims are encouraged to fast six days in Shawwal, the month following Ramadan that begins after Eid ul-Fitr; these days need not be consecutive. According to *hadith*, one who fasts the month of Ramadan and six days during Shawaal will be rewarded as though he fasted the entire year.

A distinct mark of Muslims all over the world is the exchange of this greeting when people meet or take leave from each other. It shows the innate desire of Muslims for peace and for goodwill among all men. It also reveals the great importance attributed to peace in the Islamic way of life. The word Islam, in fact, comes from the word salaam, which means peace.

In line with this, our Moslem brothers, who are members of the Warriors for Peace, celebrated Eid'1 Fitr, a festival marking the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan, last Friday, October 12, 2007 at NOBC.



