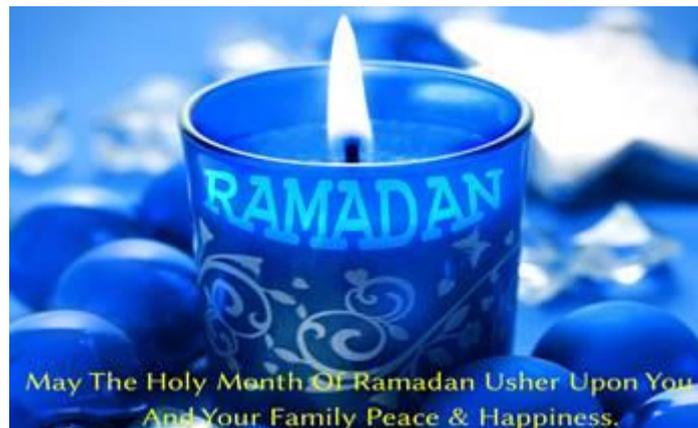


Ramadan: 27 May 2017 to 26 June 2017



The holy month of Ramadan will start at the end of May this year, marking a period of fasting and religious focus for millions of Muslims across the globe. Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar, which is based on a lunar calendar where each month begins at the start of a new moon. The start of Ramadan varies from country to country by about a day, depending on when the new moon is sighted.

The word Ramadan comes from the Arabic root *ramiḍa* or *ar-ramaḍ*, which means scorching heat or dryness.

Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam and marks the month that the Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammed. The actual night that the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad is called **Lailat ul Qadr**, and to stand in prayer on this one night is said to be better than a thousand months of worship.

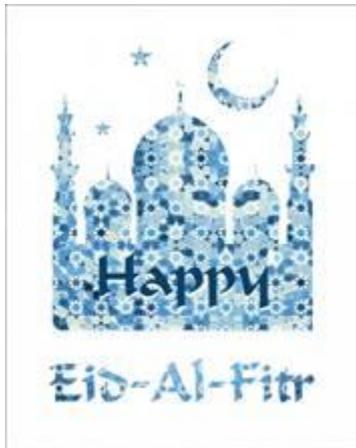
Ramadan is a holy month where many Muslims will focus on prayer and reading the Quran, while generosity and giving to good causes or neighbours is encouraged. It is a period of reflection, patience, self-restraint and generosity that is intended to bring Muslims closer to Allah. Muslims believe that their good actions bring a greater reward during this month than at any other time of year, because this month has been blessed by Allah.

They also believe that it is easier to do good in this month because the devils have been chained in Hell, and so can't tempt believers. This doesn't mean that Muslims will not behave badly, but that any evil that they do comes from within themselves, without additional encouragement from Satan. Almost all Muslims try to give up bad habits during Ramadan, and some will try to become better Muslims by praying more or reading the Qur'an.

For many Muslims it means a month of fasting from sunrise to sunset, forgoing food and water, smoking and sexual activity during daylight. When fasting, Muslims will have one meal before sunrise, called *suhour*, and share another meal with friends and family after sunset, called *iftar*.

Fasting during Ramadan is required for all Muslims from when they reach puberty, generally between the ages of 12 and 14, though some families start their children fasting at the age of 10. Those exempt from fasting are those who are too ill to fast,

the elderly, those suffering from a mental illness, those who are travelling, and women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or menstruating. People who would normally be able to fast but have been unable to due to travelling long distances or being ill are required to complete their fast at a later date.



Eid al-Fitr is the 'festival of the breaking of the fast' and marks the end of Ramadan each year. This year the date is 26 June 2017. Muslims wish each other a happy Eid during the celebrations by saying "Eid Mubarak," and often gather with family and friends to eat and pray together. The festival can last for up to three days and also sees people give money to charity as part of celebrations.