



**DİN İŞLERİ
YÜKSEK KURULU**
High Board of Religious Affairs

المجلس الأوروبي للإفتاء والبحوث
The European Council for Fatwa and
Research

FINAL DECLARATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS FOR PRAYER TIMES

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and prayers and peace be upon the Messenger who was sent as a mercy to the mankind, and upon all his brethren prophets and messengers, and upon his family and companions.

By the Grace of Allah, The International Congress for Prayer Times was held in 19-20 Safar 1443 AH which coincided with 26-27 September, 2021 in İstanbul, Turkey. It was organized by the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey in collaboration with the European Council for Fatwa and Research and was attended by participants from a number of European Islamic institutions and centres such as Islamic Community of Millî Görüş, the Islamic Centre in Aachen, the Muslim Council of France, the Paris Mosque, a number of European Imam associations, as well as a group of Imams and directors of Islamic centres and Islamic associations in Europe.

Due to the restrictions caused by the COVID 19 pandemic, a number of imams, preachers, and others from Europe, who are concerned with determining the dates and times of Islamic religious events and observances, participated online.

The conference was honoured by the participation of the following eminent scholars:

Prof. Ali Erbaş, President of the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey.

Prof. Abdurrahman Haçkalı, President of High Board of Religious Affairs.

Sheikh Allama Professor Ali Muhyealdin Al-Quradaghi, Secretary General of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, and member of the European Council for Fatwa and Research.

Prof. Suhaib Hasan, Acting President of the European Council for Fatwa and Research.

Prof. Hussein Halawa, Secretary General of the European Council for Fatwa and Research.

Dr. Ekrem Keleş, former President of High Board of Religious Affairs.

The conference was held following the conclusion of the work of the Scientific Committee, which continued uninterrupted since 12 March 2016, in the wake of a scientific symposium organized by the Fatwa Committee in Germany under the theme: “Methods of determining prayer times in Germany and proposals for harmonising calculation methods”. The symposium was attended by the President of Religious Affairs of Turkey and a number of members of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, Islamic centres and institutions in the West, and the Islamic Community of Millî Görüş in Germany. Thereafter, the responsibility for this work passed on to the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey in collaboration with the European Council for Fatwa and Research. Following consultations with many stakeholders such as jurists, astronomers, imams and officials of Islamic centres in Europe, a Scientific Committee was established, which has met six times since then. The Committee organised a specialized symposium at the Islamic Centre in Aachen in 2018. It also set up an observation team for prayer times made up of jurists and astronomers. The team made three observation trips: the first trip was in Berlin, Germany; the second in Prague, Czech Republic; and the third in Bolu, Turkey. The weather and site conditions were not conducive to a proper observation of fajr and isha times in the first two locations. The third location was more suitable. The results of the prayer time observations in that trip were recorded in the Committee’s report and have been used as a basis for the scheme which was approved by the conference.

Thereafter the Committee collected various calendars and methods of calculating prayer times commonly used in Europe, and began studying them and analysing their shortcomings to establish the extent to which they suited the conditions in Europe. The Committee later published an official advertisement in which it called for proposals for solving the problems related to determining dates and times of Islamic religious events and observances according to certain criteria determined by the Committee.

As a result, the Committee received six proposals, and after the long meetings to evaluate them from all perspectives, it agreed to recommend one proposal which was presented and discussed at the conference.

The conference was preceded by a lengthy online meeting between the Scientific Committee and a number of imams and directors of Islamic centres in Scandinavian countries. During that meeting, a scheme for determining dates and times of Islamic religious events and observances was presented, the Committee listened to the comments from the participants and later amended the scheme taking into account those comments.

The conference was opened with a recitation of some verses from the Holy Qur'an, followed by a statement by Prof. Abdurrahman Haçkalı, followed by a statement by Prof. Suhaib Hasan, followed by a statement by Sheikh Prof. Ali Muhyealdin Al-Quradaghi. The opening session of the conference was concluded with a statement by Prof. Ali Erbaş, The President of Religious Affairs of Turkey.

During a later session, Prof. Ali Muhyealdin Al-Quradaghi presented a paper on Islamic religious events and observances: their foundations, framework, purposes and significance. On the basis of Islamic jurisprudence, he presented a balanced approach which sought to minimise hardships facing Muslims in Europe and to achieve unity amongst them.

Dr. Khaled Hanafy, a member of the Scientific Committee, presented a paper in which he addressed the Islamic jurisprudential principles on which the scheme was based, and put forward solutions to the most important problems referred to in the scheme in the light of previous discussion during a meeting held in Strasbourg. Sheikh Uzeyir Ozturk, another member of the Scientific Committee, addressed the proposals which had been submitted to the Committee, compared them, and explained their astronomical concepts and practical tables.

Dr. Ounis Guergah, also a member of the Committee, gave a presentation on the prospects for implementing the scheme and minimising differences amongst Muslims in Europe.

Following these presentations, the floor was opened for comments on the scheme from participants present at the conference venue and online participants during the two days of the conference.

The conference concluded with the following resolutions and recommendations:

1. It approved the Scientific Committee's scheme for drawing up calendars (with prayer times) based on the Islamic definition of "one third of the night" and which provides that the minimum period of a day and of a night is five hours each. It recommends that:

a. Prayer times must be adhered to unless an exceptional hardship arises, and the exemption is limited to the period of the hardship.

b. Fajr time - as was agreed at the Strasbourg meeting - starts with a white streak of light across the eastern horizon – which becomes visible when the Sun approaches to 18 degrees below the horizon.

c. 'Isha time starts when the red twilight on the western horizon disappears, and this occurs when the sun descends to 17 degrees below the horizon.

d. The time of Fajr and the time of 'Isha should be estimated in approximate terms when there is no sign on the horizon to indicate the time, and this estimation should be based on the most recent day when such a sign was visible.

The time of Fajr and the time of 'Isha should also be estimated in approximate terms even when there is a sign on the horizon to indicate the time if adhering to the right time were to lead to exceptional hardship such as when the time of 'Isha or Fajr commences after one third of the night has passed.

2. The conference established a sub-committee of jurists and astronomers to follow up on the implementation of the scheme and to prepare and publish prayer times, as well as to be in constant contact with Islamic centres and institutions in Europe regarding the implementation of the scheme in various countries and cities,

3. The conference agreed to follow up on the implementation of the scheme in latitudes above 60 degrees, and to monitor and assess the problems resulting from its implementation and to modify the scheme accordingly,

4. The conference agreed to create a webpage to facilitate the prayer times obtained according to the criteria that was decided by the conference,

5. The conference agreed to develop a free mobile application for finding out prayer times in cities and towns across the world according to the criteria set by the Scientific Committee,

6. The Scientific Committee agreed to organize a number of meetings in Europe to promote the scheme, to answer questions and seek to solve problems which arise in the course of its implementation in some areas,

7. The conference endorsed the decision of Fiqh councils regarding the permissibility of combining two prayers during periods of severe hardship when it is extremely difficult to perform prayers at the time specified in the scheme.

8. The conference called on imams and preachers, directors of Islamic centres and institutions in Europe, and Muslims at large to unite their ranks and to avoid having multiple prayer times because of the variety of methods of calculation within one country or even one city as this creates doubt in some people's mind regarding their worship and causes hardship to Muslims at large, and does not reflect the civilised image of Islam.

The participants thanked Turkey's president, government and people for hosting the conference, the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey, the European Council for Fatwa and Research, the Scientific Committee, and everyone who made an effort or spent time to complete this scheme and bring it to light.

We pray Allah Almighty to help us unite the ranks of Muslims, do good deeds and excel in our work, and we conclude by thanking Allah, Lord of the worlds.



