CAIR NEW JERSEY

RAMADAN & EID UL-FITR:
GUIDE FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

UNDERSTANDING RAMADAN & EID

Ramadan is the holiest month in Islam, observed by millions of Muslims worldwide, including thousands in New Jersey. It is a time of fasting, worship, reflection, self-discipline, and community service. Fasting from dawn to sunset during the holy month of Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam, with Muslims refraining from food, drink, and other physical needs during daylight hours. The fast is broken each evening with a meal called Iftar, often shared with family, friends, and community.

Eid ul-Fitr, or the "Festival of Breaking the Fast," is the celebration immediately after the conclusion of Ramadan. It is a joyous occasion of gratitude, family gatherings, and community engagement.

KEY ASPECTS OF RAMADAN

- Fasting (Sawm): From dawn to sunset, Muslims abstain from eating, drinking, and other activities to develop self-discipline and spiritual growth.
- Suhoor: The pre-dawn meal Muslims eat before they begin their daily fast at sunrise.
- Iftar: The meal that breaks the fast at sunset, marking the end the day of fasting, often shared with family and friends.
- Prayer (Salah): Increased focus on daily prayers, including special nightly prayers called Qiyam ul-Layl and Tarawih when in congregation.
- Charity (Zakat & Sadaqah): Emphasis on giving to those in need, supporting food drives, and other charitable acts. Zakat al-Mal is an annual obligatory almsgiving of a portion of one's wealth (2.5%) to support those in financial hardship.
- Community Gatherings: Iftar dinners bring together family, friends, and interfaith communities to break the fast.

KEY ASPECTS OF EID UL-FITR

- Special Prayer (Salat al-Eid): Muslims attend a special, typically very large, congregational prayer service in mosques, convention centers, or outdoor spaces such as parks.
- Charity (Zakat al-Fitr): A required charitable donation before Eid prayer to assist those in need.
- Community & Cultural Celebrations: Families and friends come together for worship, meals, gift-giving, and festivities.

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HOW ELECTED OFFICIALS CAN SUPPORT THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

- Extending Greetings: Use thoughtful greetings like "Ramadan Mubarak" and "Eid Mubarak" to show respect for these significant occasions and strengthen connections with Muslim constituents.
- Recognizing Ramadan & Eid: Issue proclamations, public statements and social media posts acknowledging the significance of these observances.
- Engaging with the Community: Attend or support local Iftar dinners, Eid celebrations, and community events, or host such events of your own.
- Accommodating Muslim Constituents: Encourage workplace and school accommodations for fasting individuals and Eid observances.
- Supporting Policy Priorities: Advocate for issues affecting the Muslim community, including religious accommodations and civil rights protections.
    - Accommodation requests to employers, schools, and universities may include observance of Eid, the availability of prayer spaces, halal food, and flexible working hours and time to attend the weekly Friday congregational prayer.

WHEN IS THE EXPECTED START & END DATE OF RAMADAN

Depending on sighting of the new moon, Ramadan is expected to begin on Wednesday, February 18, 2026, or Thursday, February 19, 2026. The end of Ramadan or Eid ul-Fitr is expected to be on Friday, March 20, or Saturday, March 21, also depending on the sighting of the moon.

FUN FACTS

- Muslims make up 3.5% of New Jersey's population, making the state home to the largest percentage of Muslims in the U.S.
- The crescent moon and lanterns are cultural symbols often used in decorations during Ramadan.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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