

An Insight Into Ramadhan

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What is Ramadhan?

“Ramadhan” is the name of the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, the month in which the Holy Scripture, the Qur’an, was revealed by Allah (God) to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).¹

Ramadhan is the month in which Muslims (over the age of maturity and in good health) fast (no food or water) from dawn till dusk. Fasting is one of the five key pillars of Islam, the others being monotheism (“tawheed”), prayer (“salah”), alms (“zakah”) and pilgrimage to Mecca (“hajj”).

It is an incredibly auspicious month and considered one of the holiest periods for worship. For Muslims, it is a period of the year they look forward to the most, where multiple family gatherings are held, and local community members come together in mosques.

According to the Islamic faith, the reward for good deeds is multiplied many-fold during this month, and it is also a time where past sins are forgiven. There is a special night in the last ten days of Ramadhan known as the Night of Power (“Laylat-ul-Qadr”), where acts of good deeds attract a reward equivalent to doing good deeds for a period of a thousand months.²

This is also a month in which Muslims exercise extra charity. Muslims give away 2.5% of their wealth (known as zakah) for the betterment of the less privileged in society.

Why do Muslims fast?

Whilst a slimmer waistline will make most of us happy, the purpose behind fasting is much deeper. From a spiritual perspective, the Qur’an refers to fasting as a “prescription” so that

¹ Surah Al-Baqarah (The Heifer), The Holy Qur’an, 2:185.

² Surah Al-Qadr (The Night of Power), The Holy Qur’an, 97:3.

Muslims may learn self-restraint and become righteous.³ During the fasting portion of the day, Muslims abstain from bad habits (*i.e.*, bad language, being disrespectful, backbiting, hubris, egotism etc.) and sins. Fasting enables extra focus and mindfulness, and the hope is to continue these good habits beyond the month of Ramadhan.

Muslims use this month for increased worship, practicing good manners and etiquettes, showing kindness to all, empathising with those who are less privileged, donating to those in need, being grateful for all that you have and drawing closer to loved ones.

There are also physiological benefits to fasting. During fasting, the body undergoes autophagy, a phenomenon whereby the body “self-cleanses” and gets rid of “bad”/damaged cells.⁴

What does my typical day look like during Ramadhan?

I am privileged to have clerks and members of staff in my chambers who take extra measures with my practice during the month of Ramadhan. For example, my clerks will try to allocate court work to me that is being heard remotely, or if in-person, as local to me as possible. The biggest challenge when travelling to court and conducting advocacy is dehydration, therefore a helping hand from chambers is always welcome.

I have set out below, what a typical day looks like for me as a barrister during the month of Ramadhan:

4.45am – I wake up to eat the pre-dawn meal (known as “suhoor”). My usual go-to is nearly always a good serving of overnight oats, with dates or banana, and scrambled eggs. Followed by as much water as my stomach will allow.

5.20am – I pray the compulsory dawn prayer (known as “Fajr”), followed by a small amount of sleep.

8am – 5pm – Depending on my diary, travel and attendance at court or drafting advices and court documents. Once the day’s work commitments are completed, I put away my barrister’s wig and don a chef’s hat...only to be given the role of cutting the salad.

³ Surah Al-Baqarah (The Heifer), The Holy Qur’an, 2:183.

⁴ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10509423/>.

5.44pm – Breaking of the fast (known as “iftar”) with the family, traditionally begun by eating dates and drinking water. By the end of the meal, my waist size goes from 34 to 38.

Evening – Attending optional congregational prayer (known as “tarawih”) at my local mosque or alternatively, praying at home. This is followed by a small amount of exercise (it is possible that I may gorge on cakes instead) and spending time with the family. If my stomach permits, another small meal or a snack before heading to bed as early as possible.

How is the end of Ramadhan celebrated?

Muslims follow the lunar calendar, and when the new moon is sighted, Ramadhan comes to an end. At this point, Muslims celebrate the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr by attending a special congregational prayer at the mosque in the morning, and after that gather and feast with their loved ones. This is a day where I undo all the hard work of fasting and gain all the weight back!

It is bittersweet to say goodbye to Ramadhan, but every Muslim looks forward to doing it all over again the next year.

Ramadhan Mubarak to all!

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