



BBSI GUIDELINES FOR THE EID PRAYER AND PRACTICES DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

BBSIG-08 | 18TH MAY 2020/1441 H



**The British Board of
Scholars & Imams**

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Authored & Produced by
The British Board of Scholars & Imams

The British Board of Scholars & Imams (BBSI)

The BBSI is an apolitical national assembly of imams, traditional scholars and islamically literate academics formed to facilitate scholarly intra-Muslim research and dialogue, and to provide authoritative ethico-theological guidance and leadership on matters relevant to Muslims, whilst promoting wider community welfare.

Vision

Empower Imams & Scholars in order that they might contribute to equity, social cohesion, and the common good in the UK.

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BBSI Guidelines for the Eid Prayer and Practices during the Coronavirus Pandemic

The BBSI is an apolitical national assembly of imams, traditional scholars and Islamically literate Muslim academics formed to facilitate scholarly intra-Muslim research and dialogue. Our aim is to provide authoritative ethico-theological guidance and leadership on matters relevant to Muslims, whilst promoting wider community welfare. It primarily seeks to do this by developing theological leadership that can authentically represent the rich scholarly inheritance of Islam, whilst responding flexibly to the context of modern times. Its ultimate aim is to both serve and represent the Muslim community in an ethical, inclusive, professional, and scholar-led way.

The BBSI especially takes seriously the responsibility to provide theologically grounded, practically focussed, holistic and – above all – cool-headed and far-sighted guidance to the community in times of generalised anxiety and panic. This advice should be read in conjunction with previous BBSI guidance (BBSIG02 and BBSIG05).

Due to the current lockdown restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, public performance of Eid and Jumu'a prayers, both of which involve large congregations, are currently suspended across the country – whether performance in mosques and community centres or in open areas. It is understood that this will be distressing to very many people, given the social and religious significance of the Eid prayer. Unfortunately, though the BBSI – along with other faith communities – is engaged in current discussions with Public Health England and HM Government, it is extremely unlikely that lockdown restrictions will be relaxed sufficiently in time to allow public and open performance of the Eid prayer.

The Fiqh of Eid Prayer

1. Even more so than Jumu'a, the Eid prayer is, of course, one of the great symbols of Islam: a gathering of men, women and children that promotes and encourages unity and togetherness.

2. However, it should be noted that, while the Hanafi school considers the performance of the Eid prayer to be personally obligatory (wajib), the majority of the extant Sunni schools, namely the Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools, consider the individual's performance of the prayer to be recommended rather than obligatory.
3. Unlike Jumu'a, Eid is a morning prayer, which can only validly be performed from shortly after sunrise to shortly before noon (though Shafis extend this to sunset). Additionally, the khutba sermon is optional, and performed after prayer rather than before it.
4. According to the Hanafi school of law, the Eid prayer is necessarily a congregational, public prayer that must meet the same conditions as the Friday prayer in order to be valid. These conditions classically include performance in a major settled habitation (a town rather than a village), open access for all to attend, minimally four adult males, and official permission (a condition relating to public order).
 - a. Due to these strict conditions, Hanafis do not permit the Eid prayer to be performed at home; a person not able to make the Eid prayer is instead recommended to pray 2 or 4 rakats of nafl prayer individually.
 - b. The Hanafis take as evidence the fact of the Prophet's (saw) encouragement of women to attend the Eid prayer. Given the general recommendation for women to pray in their homes, they opine that had individual, domiciliary performance of Eid prayer been possible at home, he (saw) would not have encouraged them to attend the public performance.
 - c. There has been a novel opinion mooted by some contemporary hanafi scholars that would permit the Eid prayer in homes, provided four adult males are present. Though this does not appear to have precedent in the classical school, it may be an option that some choose to follow.
5. According to the Shafi'i and Maliki schools, it is considered to be an optional prayer, and so follow the general principles around them rather than follow the conditions of the Friday prayer. As such, it does not require a congregation, publicity, or governmental permission in order to be valid.

- a. The Shafi'i and Maliki schools also state that if a person misses the Eid prayer or is unable to attend due to an excuse, then the Eid prayer can be performed at home.
 - b. In Shafii school, this can be done in congregation, though the major (*masbūr*) position of the Maliki school is that the prayer is to be performed individually.
6. In the Hanbali School of law, the Eid prayer is a communal obligation (*fard kifayah*) and has the same conditions as the Friday prayer such as 40 local men attending. However, these are conditions of that relate to whether or not it is considered a communal obligation or not, rather than whether the performance of the Eid prayer with less than this number is valid. They cite as evidence a narration that if Anas bin Malik (r) missed the Eid prayer with the imam, would gather his family and perform it at home.

In summary, those Muslims who wish to adhere to the stricter position of the Hanafi school will not be able to perform the Eid prayer this year, and can replace it with a 2/4 rakat nafl prayer performed at home, either individually or with a family congregation. Those who wish to adopt the position of the other madhabs are recommended to perform Eid prayer in congregation with their families, as described below, and as many have been already doing throughout the month of Ramadan in Tarawih. There is no requirement for a khutba (sermon) to be given.

The Method of Performing Eid Prayer

1. The Eid prayer is a two normal rakat prayer, distinguished by the performance of additional takbirs (proclaiming 'Allah Akbar' and raising the hands to the ears) during the standing in both rakats.
2. The precise manner differs between schools, though in Shafii, Maliki and Hanbali schools, they are **recommended** and not obligatory (and so non-performance does not affect the validity of the prayer).
 - a. In the Shafi'i school, 7 additional takbirs are performed at the beginning of the first rakat and 5 takbirs at the beginning of the second.

- b. In the Maliki and Hanbali schools, 6 additional takbirs are done at the beginning of the first rakat and 5 takbirs at the beginning of the second rakat.
 - c. In the Hanafi School, 3 additional takbirs are done in each unit. These takbirs are considered as obligatory (wājib) and can be done before or after recitation in each rakat (the preferred method is to do them before recitation in the first rakat and after the recitation in the second).
 - d. It is sunnah to raise one's hands for every additional takbir in all the schools.
3. Reciting the Quran in the prayer out loud is acceptable in all schools, and obligatory (wājib) in the Hanafi School.
4. The Sermon (Khutbah) is performed after the prayer, in Arabic and all schools agree that it is recommended rather than obligatory.

In summary:

- A Hanafi who wishes to perform the Eid prayer at home may do so in the normal manner that they are used to, without being concerned about 'getting it right'
- Those of other schools can also perform it in the manner they are accustomed to.
- A Hanafi wishing to follow their own school can perform an optional prayer in their homes in congregation, but without the intention of Eid prayer and without extra takbirs.

Etiquettes and Festivities of Eid

In light of the difference of opinion on the issue, the unprecedented situation Muslim are facing, and the need for many to maintain the performance of Eid and make it a day of joyous celebration, gratitude to Allah, and worship for one's family, individuals are thus permitted and in fact encouraged to perform Eid prayers at home – whether individually or in congregation with their families.

As the Prophet (blessings upon him) said, “Every nation has its day of celebration, and this is our day of celebration.” (al-Bukhari). It is therefore highly recommended for people to continue honouring this day by taking a bath, wearing one’s best clothing, applying fragrances, maintaining familial ties (online or telephone), presenting a cheerful and smiling face to others, and paying the Zakat al-Fitr (fitrana) charity.

Importantly, families should make efforts to make the day memorable for children, by partaking in things that elicit happiness and jubilation. It would be advisable for families to prepare for the day of Eid, perhaps by constructing a ‘mihrab’ or ‘mini-masjid’ in their homes, to get their children into the spirit of Eid in these unprecedented circumstances. The reality of this day as one of celebration where we express thankfulness to Allah remains, even if we are unable to perform it in the manner normally done at other times.

Adhering to the Law our Responsibility

We realise that Eid is normally a time of coming together and meeting with friends and loved ones. Despite how tempting this may be, we urge you to strictly adhere to the guidelines set out by the UK government in your interactions with others, especially family members. COVID-19 remains a real threat to all communities, especially the vulnerable elderly and BME populations, and our responsibilities to minimise the risk of transmission of a virus that has caused so much suffering and death remains as acute as it was before.

After Eid

Ramadan is a great gift and blessing that Allah has given to us as Muslims in order for us to increase in obedience and awareness of Him. We should make a conscious effort to continue the good work that we did in Ramadan after Ramadan, such as regular recitation and pondering of the Quran, giving in charity, supplications, and regular fasting. The Prophet (saw) encouraged people to follow up Ramadan with additional fasts after Eid by saying, “Whoever fasts and follows it up with six from Shawwal, he has the equivalent of fasting the entire year.”

Everyone at the BBSI would like to wish you and your families a blessed Eid and we pray that Allah grants us and you the best of the forthcoming year and the best of what it contains and that He protects from the evil of the forthcoming year and the evil of what it contains.



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