



# RAMADAN – 2017

## ADVICE & AWARENESS

### WHEN IS RAMADAN IN 2017?

The Islamic calendar is lunar, which means that days start at sunset. This year Ramadan commences on Saturday 27 May, although this can vary depending when the new moon is first sighted. Ramadan typically lasts for 29-30 days and culminates in the celebration of Eid-UI-Fitr.

#### WHAT IS RAMADAN?

In Islamic tradition, Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. This is the month when the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). There are five pillars of Islam and observing Ramadan is the fourth pillar. Ramadan is the abstaining from food and drink, known as fasting. Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset every day.

#### WHO OBSERVES RAMADAN?

Ramadan is celebrated by Muslims who are followers of the religion of Islam. All Muslims who have reached puberty are obliged to fast. Not all Muslims will fast throughout Ramadan - among others, children, the elderly, the ill and pregnant or breastfeeding women are exempt.

#### WHAT DO MUSLIMS DO IN RAMADAN?

Muslims have their main meals before sunrise and after sunset. The morning meal is known as Suhoor and the evening meal is known as Iftar. During Ramadan, in addition to the five daily prayers, there are special nightly prayers known as Taraweeh. The last 10 days of Ramadan are especially important with increased prayers as the night of "Lailat al Qadr", described in the Qu'ran as a night "better than a thousand months", falls in this period.

#### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF RAMADAN?

More than just fasting, Ramadan is about discipline and self control. It is a time of prayer and self-reflection, where Muslims are encouraged to read the entire Qur'an. Ramadan is also a time for giving to charity and participating in charitable events.

#### AWARENESS

Others may not understand what Muslim colleagues are doing. To protect from potential discrimination, employers are advised to ensure staff are made aware of what is involved for their colleagues who are observing Ramadan and the potential impact it may have on the workplace.

#### FLEXIBLE WORKING

For most Muslims, the daily routine changes radically during Ramadan. To a certain extent, night becomes day and vice-versa. This change may affect their sleep pattern and energy. Employers are advised to consider flexible working arrangements such as a temporary change in core hours of work or remote working arrangements for a limited period.

#### HEALTH & SAFETY

As energy levels and concentration may be affected particularly towards the end of the day. From a health & safety and performance perspective, employers are advised to consider arranging, where possible, complex or lengthy tasks to take place earlier in the day.

#### ANNUAL LEAVE

Muslims celebrate the end of Ramadan with Eid-UI-Fitr for which there is no public holiday. There may be an increased demand for annual leave. If there are a high number of requests, employers are advised to establish a fair allocation system and to handle rejection sensitively and reach a compromise.

#### CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

Client companies and colleagues based in majority Muslim countries operate differently during Ramadan. This includes operating reduced working hours where, in some countries such as Saudi Arabia, it is not unusual for people to work until midday and return later at night for a few hours. Employees working with clients or colleagues based in majority Muslim countries should be made aware of this impact of Ramadan on working patterns and hours of business. Showing flexibility, understanding and offering to reschedule meetings will ensure good client relationships are maintained.