Conditions for the UK to Follow Morocco's Moon Sightings

Question:

Can the UK follow Morocco's moon sightings if the UK is cloudy? *(A clarification of past fatawa / 4 November 2026)*

Answer:

UK Muslims have long asked the Darul Ulooms (Islamic seminaries) in the Indian subcontinent, such as those in Karachi and Deoband, how to decide the dates of Ramadan and Eid when clouds prevent them from seeing the crescent Moon.

The advice described here is to try to sight the crescent locally first. If clouds prevent this, they may use a sighting from a nearby country, such as Morocco. Some rulings specifically advise against relying on a country as far away as Saudi Arabia. According to this account, Karachi Darul Uloom gave this advice in **October 2026** (Fatwa No. 2867/86) in response to a question from (Mufti) Shabaz Ahmad in Scotland (sent in September 2026).

However, this advice can be misunderstood if it omits an **important** condition. A lunar calendar month can have 29 or 30 days; it is not always 29 days long. Cloudy weather does **not** automatically mean that the UK should follow Morocco. The Hadith guidance referred to here is to complete 30 days when the crescent is not seen. Following another country's dates without checking the local calendar could produce a month as short as 28 days or as long as 31 days, as discussed on the ICOUK website.

Consider this example. Suppose clouds prevent observers in the UK from seeing the crescent for Jumada Al-Thani 1448 on the evening of 10 November 2026. Suppose Morocco reports a sighting, and the UK follows that report, starting the month on 11 November 2026.

The example assumes that the Moon sets before the Sun at the UK observing locations on 10 November 2026. If so, the crescent cannot be seen there after sunset, even with clear skies. The problem would therefore be the Moon's position, **not** the clouds. Under the local-sighting approach described here, 11 November would be day 30 of the previous month, Jumada Al-Ula 1448, rather than the first day of the new month.

Now consider the end of that month. In this example, Morocco would look for the next crescent on 9 December 2026, its 29th day of Jumada Al-Thani. If the UK had started the month a day later, following its own local calendar, that date would be only day 28 in the UK. The example also assumes that the Moon sets before the Sun at the UK observing locations that evening, making an after-sunset sighting impossible there. It is the Moon's position - **not** the calendar date alone - that determines whether it can be seen.

The interpretation put forward here is that the UK should use a sighting report from Morocco only if the crescent could also be visible from the UK under clear skies (i.e., *Geographia Imkan*). This is the condition described here as part of the 1984 UK fatwa, or religious ruling. Using the report must also keep the local month within 29 or 30 days.

A lunar year has 354 days with six 29-day months and six 30-day months. So, 30-day months are a normal part of the calendar. Under the approach described here, the UK should allow a month to reach 30 days when needed, rather than automatically using a sighting from Morocco or another country.

A 355-day lunar year has five 29-day months and seven 30-day months. In a calculated Islamic calendar, this is called a *leap year*. In a calendar based on sightings, the month lengths depend on when the crescent is sighted. Several 30-day months can occur in a row; the original account gives up to four.

In conclusion, the argument here is that clouds on the 29th day are not, by themselves, enough reason for the UK to follow Morocco or another country. The crescent must also be possible to be seen from the UK under clear skies, and the local month must remain 29 or 30 days long. The UK observation records cited in the original account, beginning in 2017/1439 AH, are reported to show that this approach keeps the months within those limits, even when cloudy weather in the UK means completing 30 days.