

**Subject: Clarifications on facing the Qibla**  
**From: Local Fiqh Committee, Winnipeg, Manitoba.**  
**Date: October 12, 2013**

Facing the Qibla (direction of the Ka’ba) during prayer (Salah) is a mandatory (fard) requirement. Allah SWT says in the Quran: “Hence, from wherever you may come forth, turn your face [in prayer] towards the Sacred House of Worship; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces towards it”<sup>i</sup> As well, the Prophet peace be upon him said: “When you stand for prayer, complete your wudu’, then face the Qiblah, then say Allāhu Akbar”<sup>ii</sup>. Accordingly, there is a full consensus (Ijma’) among scholars on this issue.<sup>iii</sup>

**What does it mean to face the Qibla?**

According to the majority of the scholars, those who see the Ka’ba must face its precise location, but those who don’t see the Ka’ba, are simply required to face its general direction. This is demonstrated by the fact that Allah SWT said in verse 150 of Surah Al-Baqara: “and wherever you all may be, turn your faces towards it (Shatrah)”. The Arabic word used in the verse “shatrah” means the general direction not the exact angle, as this becomes difficult to achieve at far distances<sup>iv</sup>.

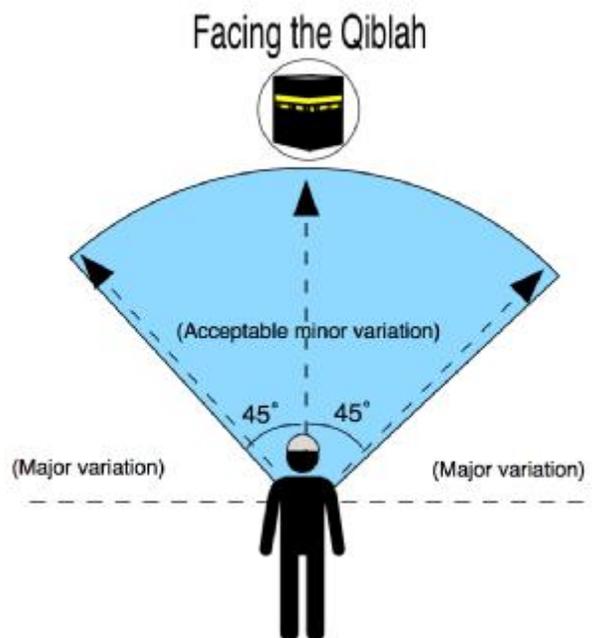
Furthermore, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whatever is between the east and the west is the qiblah.”<sup>v</sup> Al-Imam Al-San’aani commented on this hadith: “This hadeeth indicates that what is required is to face in that direction, and not towards the precise location of the Ka’bah when one cannot see it”<sup>vi</sup>.

Moreover, scholars note that Allah SWT says: “and [He] has imposed no difficulties on you in religion”<sup>vii</sup>. Al-Imam Ibn Rushd observes that requiring the facing of the specific location of Ka’ba would be a hardship that goes contrary to the spirit of this verse<sup>viii</sup>. They also point that practically speaking facing the specific location of Ka’ba is not achievable for all; especially when the lines in the masjid are long and straight. Those who are far from the center (assuming the center is facing the specific location) can only face the direction not the exact location.<sup>ix</sup>

Accordingly, the overwhelming majority of scholars indicate that minor (Yaseer) variation in Qibla from the precise location of Ka’ba is acceptable and tolerable as long as the general direction is towards Ka’ba.

**What is considered minor (yaseer) variation?**

Sheikh Hussam A’fana, a renowned scholar of Islamic jurisprudence, notes that some contemporary scholars have estimated the tolerable variance as 45 degrees<sup>x</sup>. Accordingly, anything less will be within the tolerable variation. Any thing higher would be considered major.



## How do we measure the direction of Qibla?

The simple means available such as the compass and internet provide close approximations but not the exact and precise measurements. “People tend to use compass for determining Qibla, but they do not realize the errors involved in compass. Firstly, the compass is affected by metallic objects in the vicinity, in furniture, in building materials, or even buried in the ground, so the compass placed at different locations in the same room gives different directions. Secondly, the angle of Qibla can only be calculated from True North, and True North cannot be determined by compass. Compass points to magnetic North, (based on earths magnetic field, which is changing continuously, and sometimes has erratic behavior) that may be many degrees away from True North”.<sup>xi</sup> Accordingly, only more sophisticated methods would provide a more precise and accurate estimation.

## Our current Qibla:

Our current Qibla in Hazelwood masjid is facing north east based on reliable geographical maps and satellite technology, and can be confirmed by readily available internet tools.<sup>xii</sup> Accordingly, it is in the acceptable range and general direction (*shatrah*) of Makkah, meeting the fiqhi requirements mentioned. Therefore, there should be no concerns with respect to its accuracy.<sup>xiii</sup>

*Wa Allahu ta’ala A’lam.*

Please feel free to contact the Fiqh Committee for further questions or clarification @ office@miaonline.org

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<sup>i</sup> Surah 2 (Al-Baqarra), verses 150

<sup>ii</sup> Reported in *Sahih Muslim*

<sup>iii</sup> Al-Shawkani, *Nail Al-Awtar*, volume 2, P 166 (نيل الأوطار للشوكاني)

<sup>iv</sup> Winnipeg, for instance, is over 10 000 km away from Makkah, which means that even turning slightly by 1 degree causes over 175km difference in the ultimate location that a person is facing ( $\tan 1=175/10000$ ). This is why the Shari’ah does not burden people with facing a precise location.

<sup>v</sup> Reported by al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Maajah; classified as *saheeh* by al-Albaani in his book *Irwa Al-Ghaleel*. (إرواء الغليل للألباني)

<sup>vi</sup> Al-Sanaani, *Subul al-Salaam*, volume 1, page 260 (سبل السلام للصنعاني)

<sup>vii</sup> Surah 22 (Al-Hajj), verse 78

<sup>viii</sup> Ibn Rushd, *Bidaiat Al-Mujtahid*, volume 1, page 217. (بداية المجتهد لابن رشد)

<sup>ix</sup> Wahba Al-Zuhaili, *Al-Fiqh Al-Islami Wa Adilatuh*, Volume 1, P 597 (الفقه الإسلامي وأدلته لوهبة الزحيلي)

<sup>x</sup> <http://ar.islamway.net/fatwa/27887>

<sup>xi</sup> <http://moonsighting.com/qibla.html>

<sup>xii</sup> <http://www.elahmad.com/maps/qibla-english.htm> see also <http://www.qiblalocator.com>

<sup>xiii</sup> When the Hazelwood mosque was initially built in 1976, the Qibla was set towards the South East. Few years later in the early 1980s, a committee made up of the late Dr. Riaz Uthmani (one of the community elders) and Br. Ayub Hamis (Ex-MIA President and Khateeb) investigated the matter and reached to the conclusion that the Qibla was set in the wrong direction and it needed to be redirected to the North East. After contacting various authorities on the subject locally, nationally and internationally, the Qibla was re-directed to where it is currently, the North East.