12 May 2021 – As we come to the end of the holy month of Ramadan, I would like to wish everyone in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and beyond a blessed and happy Eid al-Fitr.

During this holiday, we not only celebrate the end of dawn-to-sunset fasting during Ramadan, but we also pay respect to Allah for giving us the strength to practise self control during the month-long rituals of rigorous fasting and prayer.

On the first morning of Eid al-Fitr, Muslims around the world attend mass prayers in mosques. Following this, the remainder of the holiday is typically marked by the wearing of fine clothing, greeting friends and loved ones, and coming together to share traditional foods and exchange gifts.

But while Eid al-Fitr gives us an opportunity to relax from the month-long rituals of Ramadan, let us not relax the practices that protect us and others from COVID-19.

In a few weeks, our Region will reach the shocking milestone of 10 million people infected with COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. This points to only one reason: that we are not doing everything we can do to contain and control this virus.

Too many people are becoming complacent and not adhering to the measures needed to help us save lives, giving the virus opportunities to spread further.

I urge you all, during this holiday season and beyond, to not just celebrate the mark of a new holy month, but to also celebrate life, by making sure that no one is put in a position where they unknowingly spread the virus or are infected by others.

Let us make sure that this Eid al-Fitr, no one is infected or dies as a result of their own complacent behaviour, or that of others. Let us make the coming period one of joy and not mourning for families who may lose loved ones or friends. We all deserve to celebrate Eid al-Fitr safely this year.

In these trying times, let us use opportunities like Eid al-Fitr to spread love, gratitude and hope.

We can do this by performing our Eid al-Fitr prayers alone or with the family at home, as announced last year by Al Azhar and Dar Al Iftaa.

We can stay physically distant but socially connected by avoiding physical greetings, social feasts, and other social gatherings.

These small acts of self-restraint are easy to do and can have huge consequences on containing the spread of COVID-19 in the Region and serving the common good.

I wish you, your families and loved ones a safe and healthy Eid al-Fitr.

Related link

Celebrating Eid al-Fitr safely in 2021 during COVID-19

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