



Hajj and Umrah during Pandemic Covid-19: The Case of Indonesia

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Abstract

Hajj and Umrah are included in the main worship in Islam. Although the ritual is more prominent, there is no doubt that the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages to Makkah and trips to Medina are commonly accepted as religious events as well as the most important halal tourism in the life of a Muslim. When viewed from the time that has been running for centuries and the total number of participants and the countries of the world that are involved, it is not an exaggeration if Hajj and Umrah can be called as one of largest travel and event in the world. The Covid-19 Pandemic that lasted from the end of 2019 until 2022, has caused a far-reaching impact. There are restrictions everywhere on gathering activities as a result of health and safety protocol policies. No exception for the Hajj and Umrah. Indonesia as a country with the most Muslim population in the world is certainly significantly affected, namely by the cancellation of the delivery of Pilgrims in 2020 and 2021. Likewise, the delivery of Umrah pilgrims had been in a vacuum for months. This article describes what happened starting from the reasons for the cancellation, chronology, the impact and strategic solutions carried out by the Indonesian government and the responses by stakeholder of Hajj and Umrah in Indonesia.

Keywords: Hajj, umrah; Covid-19 pandemic; Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Hajj is one of the most major worships in Islam. The Hajj occupies the position as the fifth of the five Pillars of Islam. Hajj must be carried out if you can at least once in a lifetime. Therefore, every year the Hajj procession has become one of the largest events on the face of the earth with millions of Islamic Ummah from all over the world gathering in a giant procession around Saudi Arabia's Makkah and accompanied also to Medina for pilgrimage. Due to the high interest in hajj while the capacity of Makkah and Medina is limited, the Saudi Arabian government has given quota limits.

Umrah worship is not included in the pillars of Islam. Nevertheless, the Scholars of jurisprudence placed it as a sunnah worship and some even said it was mandatory. On the other

hand, Umrah worship also occupies an important position for the *Bayt Allah* devotees. Along with Umrah, a pilgrimage is usually also made to the Nabawi Mosque in Medina, where is also located the Tomb of the Prophet. The city of Medina is also the city of the Prophet and Companions because it is there that the second holy city of the Islamic Ummah after Makkah al-Mukarramah as one of the most important locations that holds memories of romanticism the early days of Islam and the history of Islam throughout the ages.

Because the waiting time for the Hajj queue in Indonesia is very long, it can be over twenty years, then umrah worship can be a cure for his longing. Even because the animo of the Muslim community to do umrah from year to year is getting higher and higher, the departure is finally limited to quotas also like Hajj. Although it is not up to years to wait for those who will umrah for the first time, the queue for the departure of the pilgrims and the restriction of quotas prove that the enthusiasm of the people is very high beyond the capacity of the host.

Umrah events have a longer time opportunity than Hajj, which lasts throughout the year. However, due to the quota, priority was given to the Prime Umrah Pilgrims. Meanwhile, for those who have previously had Umrah, the government regulates the obligation to wait for several years of queues or have to pay a more expensive fee if they want to leave directly.

The lively picture of the Hajj and Umrah event above suddenly stopped when the Covid-19 Pandemic spread throughout the world. As a result, the Hajj in 2020 should only be carried out by a few people with very strict restrictions. The same goes for Umrah. After being stopped for so many months, the delivery of Umrah pilgrims from Indonesia was again permitted with a limited quota, namely in the range of February 2021. However, because there were Umrah pilgrims from Indonesia who were detected infected by the Corona virus in Saudi Arabia, the departure was stopped again. And finally, the most surprising news was when on June 3, 2021, the Indonesian Government represented by the Minister of Religious Affairs Yaqut Cholil Qoumas read out the decision in a press conference broadcast on the official YouTube site of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia stipulating the cancellation of the departure of pilgrims 2021 for Indonesian citizens, causing the delay in the queue for the departure of the Indonesian Hajj for two years because the previous year, namely 2020, was also cancelled.

The decision is certainly the best decision after considering various aspects and consulting with various parties such as the Ulama and the DPR. However, no doubt this decision is enough to have a significant impact on the organizing of Hajj and Umrah and spread to related parties (*Stakeholders*).

Hajj and Umrah are foreign events that involve many parties both at home and abroad. Related parties other than foreign parties, namely the Saudi Arabian government as the host of organizing there as well as the Indonesian government as guests. On the part of the Indonesian government, the Ministry plays a role in the main role of the Ministry of Religious Affairs from the Central, Provincial, even to the Municipal, Regency and District levels as the coordinator of its organizations. Other ministries such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are also involved according to their respective capacities and fields. At the Ministry of Religious Affairs, at the central level there is a special section that serves this event, namely the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah Organizers (PHU). Meanwhile, at the Provincial level, namely the PHU Field and the PHU Section for the Regency/City level. In addition, other related parties are the Hajj Guidance Group (KBIH) and Special Hajj and Umrah Travel. And of course, do not forget the prospective Pilgrims of Haji in 2020 in Indonesia, which reached 210 thousand people, are the main stakeholders affected by failing to leave. Meanwhile, millions of prospective Pilgrims who were included in the queue were also delayed in their departure. Restrictions on Pilgrims also extend to Umrah. This is because the location of Umrah is the same as Hajj (minus Arafah,

Musdalifah, Mina). In addition, organizing this major event also affects various businesses such as transportation business, catering, and souvenir business. Many workers or prospective workers in these sectors whose fate has become uncertain.

Currently, the Covid-19 Pandemic has gradually become endemic. However, the story of the cancellation of Indonesia's Hajj and Umrah departures during the 2020 and 2021 Pandemics along with details of the dynamics of the situation and conditions at that time can be a reference, reflection, comparison and learning for the various parties who need it.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. The location of the study was in Indonesia by taking East Java Province as the main sample. East Java Province is one of the provinces with the largest Muslim population and the highest number of Pilgrims in Indonesia.

The data was taken from the Office of the Ministry of Religion of East Java Province for the organizing of Hajj and Umrah and the Office of the Ministry of Religion of Sampang, Kediri and Jombang Regencies in Hajj and Umrah Organizer Section as representatives of Cities/Regencies in East Java.

Primary data obtained from interviews with the Hajj and Umrah Organizer Field Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion of East Java Province and Hajj and Umrah Organizer Section at several districts in East Java as a sample. In addition, the data is also in the form of documentation of the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs as well as presentation files from the Directorate General, Hajj and Umrah Organizer Field or Section of the Ministry of Religion. Secondary data was obtained from conducting interviews, documentation and observations into the environment of the provinces of East Java in particular and Indonesia in general, both offline and online.

The observations made in this study were to visit the Hajj and Umrah Implementation Field in the area office of the Ministry of Religion of East Java and Hajj and Umrah Implementation Section Office of the Ministry of Religion Regency/City represented by three regencies, namely Sampang, Kediri and Jombang Regencies. Another observation was also in the form of a researcher's experience when he was appointed as the Hajj Supervisor Certification Committee at the Sukoli Lo Hajj Dormitory in Surabaya which was held at the end of 2020 as a collaboration of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion East Java with University Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Interview data, documentation and observations were then analyzed using descriptive analysis. This technique is used to determine, interpret, describe, explain, as well as decipher data of a qualitative nature. In this study, researchers used associative descriptive analysis techniques with the aim of knowing the influence of Covid-19 pandemic on the implementation of Hajj and Umrah in Indonesia.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Hajj And Umrah During The Covid-19 Pandemic: Policies, Challenges, and Prospects

The results of this study are divided into an overview of the implementation of Hajj and the Implementation of Umrah in Indonesia during the Covid-19 Pandemic. These two years, namely 1442H/2020M and 1443H/2021M, there is no departure of Hajj by Indonesian Pilgrims. The cancellation of the departure was in the form of the issuance of The Minister of Religious Affairs Decree Number 494 of 2020 and Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 660 of 2021.

The main cause of the decision was the same as the previous year, namely due to the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid 19) Pandemic which hit almost all countries in the world including Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. In Islamic teachings, protecting the soul is one of the five *Maqasid*

Shari`ah in addition to maintaining religion, reason, ancestry, and property which are used as the main considerations in determining laws or policies by the Government in order to realize benefits for society.

Actually, the process of organizing the 2020 Hajj had begun before the spread of Covid 19 was officially declared to enter Indonesia in early March 2020. Even after that the President has issued a Presidential Envoy's Decree on the amount of cost of Hajj Pilgrimage and repayment period of hajj fees has been running. However, suddenly towards the end of March 2020 the situation of the spread of Covid 19 became increasingly precarious which required the Saudi Arabian government to implement lockdowns in Makkah and Medina and in Indonesia began to implement Large-Scale Social Restrictions.

In April 2020, the situation continued with the increasing spread of the Covid 19 virus which had reached all provinces in Indonesia and in the middle of the month President Jokowi officially designated the Corona Virus outbreak as a national disaster.

Seeing the developments that have occurred at home and abroad, including in Saudi Arabia, after consulting with competent parties including with Scholars and Experts, in early June 2020 it was announced that the cancellation of the 2020 Hajj departure by the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia was announced.

In 2021, reflecting on the previous year, the Minister of Religious Affairs immediately took the same action considering that the situation was still uncertain. On June 3, 2021, which is the nearest deadline for preparation for the implementation of the Hajj, access to Hajj services has not been opened by the Saudi Arabian government. Meanwhile, with the large scale of work on the implementation of the Indonesian Hajj, the Indonesian government considers the need for insufficient time to prepare, carry out guidance, services, and protection for pilgrims that are adequate in a safe, comfortable, orderly manner, and in accordance with the provisions of *Shari'ah*, it was again announced that the cancellation of pilgrim delivery was announced. Indonesian hajj to Saudi Arabia.

After the announcement of the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs in the community, there were Pros and Cons. Indeed, the decision was not an easy one. This is because the hajj is a major national event that has become a public spotlight and there have been many prospective pilgrims who have waited for years to be able to leave, some have even paid off their hajj trip cost. In addition, what further muddies the atmosphere is the circulation of a number of Hoaxes that describe the management of the Indonesian Hajj implementation or poor Indonesian diplomatic communication. Not to mention the news circulating that the cancellation of this Hajj was due to an International conspiracy.

However, the Government, especially the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia and its staff, are trying to carry out empathetic socialization to the community and all *stakeholders* in the implementation of the Hajj. All prospective Pilgrims are requested to accept the decision to cancel the 2021 Hajj pilgrimage, because this is the best decision that the government can make. It was also conveyed that the Ministry of Religion had made efforts, prepared everything, but the Covid-19 Pandemic was still dangerous, so it appealed to the pilgrims to be able to accept patiently and surrender because *hifz al-nafs* (guarding the soul) is certainly a priority. Because it is an *ushul fiqh* that must be considered. So, these factors became a consideration for his ability. If you are able to do it, it means that being able to afford it is capable of health, cost, safety is the main consideration.

In addition, the government also appealed to the public so that the pros and cons are addressed wisely. The pros and cons in the democratic era are acceptable but mutual respect is also a necessity in taking a stand. Let's respect each other in togetherness instead of attacking each other in differences. We must put forward a sense of faith and faith for our common benefit.

From the triangulation and analysis of the results of interviews with the Heads of Hajj and Umrah Organizer Section of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Regency/City in an area as well as at the East Java Province level and other Hajj and Umrah stakeholders, it can be seen that the people of East Java in general, they can accept and understand because they already know for themselves the global and national condition of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The same is true in general in other provinces in Indonesia.

From the triangulation of the results of interviews with Officials and Employees of the Hajj and Umrah Organizer Field Office of the Ministry of Religion of East Java Province and the results of observations in the field, researchers concluded that the impact that occurred from the cancellation of Hajj departures in East Java province was as follows:

1. Pilgrims 2020 retreat to 2021. And because the 2021 Hajj is also canceled, the Hajj will be withdrawn in 2022 or when there is a departure again.
2. Reduced or no income for Hajj and Umrah Guidance Group in East Java which amounts to 290 official institutions (which have not yet issued operational permits there are 14 institutions). As a result, there could be a reduction in employees and unemployment because the institution has no income. Some still survive, for example by using online guidance service strategies to their worshippers. In Indonesia, in addition to the guidance of Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages carried out by the government and independently, Hajj and Umrah pilgrims can take advantage of the services of the Hajj and Umrah Guidance Group Institutions.
3. For employees of the Ministry of Religious Affairs or the public who are Hajj officers, they also do not leave.
4. The bus transportation business that is usually chartered to transport groups of Pilgrims Pulang Going from the Regency to the Hajj Dormitory does not get income. In addition, nationally Aircraft and Catering Companies were also affected. But their contracts are handled by the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah Implementation at the Central level not at the regional level.
5. In Indonesia, hajj and Umrah events also involve relatives, neighbors, friends and relatives. Usually at the time of departure there is a procession of delivery of pilgrims by them and when returning there is a pick-up. After that every day many guests come to the pilgrims to greet them, hear their stories and ask for their prayers. That's when pilgrims usually give souvenirs to their guests. With the Covid-19 pandemic and the cancellation of Hajj and Umrah departures, the number of Hajj equipment and Hajj souvenirs, which are usually crowded with buyers during the Hajj season, has become empty of buyers.

About the projection of the Implementation of Hajj in 2022 from triangulation between the results of interviews with the Hajj and Umrah Organizer Filed office of the Ministry of Religion at East Java Province as well as with Hajj and Umrah Organizer Section office of the Ministry of Religion in the Regions, namely Sampang Regency, Kediri Regency and Jombang Regency turned out to be the same. Each of them couldn't and didn't dare to be sure. Nevertheless, there are three possible options. The three options are:

1. Hajj returns to normal
2. Hajj is abolished or with very limited people
3. The implementation of the Hajj is carried out with health protocols and the implementation of other policies

What happened later in 2022 was that the delivery of pilgrims from Indonesia was reopened with the pandemic health protocol. From the triangulation of interviews and data, information was also obtained that the Implementation of hajj is a Government to Government (G2G) Affair or between the central governments of the two countries, namely Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. Therefore, what is important is the policy and negotiations of the two countries, namely the

Government of Saudi Arabia and the Government of Indonesia. In addition, within the country itself, of course, each government has affairs that must be coordinated and resolved because it is related to the safety of its residents and citizens and the implementation of the Hajj is a major multi-sectoral event. Each country must respect each other.

Furthermore, it can be concluded that officials and employees of the Ministry of Religious Affairs are aware that the Implementation of Hajj and Umrah is a relationship between the two central governments. Then the central government of each country socializes, coordinates and commands the ranks of the bureaucracy under it in accordance with the central policy. For the sake of it so that in Indonesia the activities of organizing the Hajj in the Regency certainly depend on the Provincial Government. Because the implementation of hajj in the provincial government also depends on the central government.

As one of the service centers for the implementation of hajj, the activities of the Ministry of Religion Office both at the East Java Provincial level and the Ministry of Agama Regency are adjusting to the situation and conditions of the Covid-19 Pandemic. From the triangulation of interviews and observations to the Office of the Ministry of Religion of East Java Province and the Office of Hajj and Umrah Organizer of the Ministry of Religion of East Java Province, along with the Office of Hajj and Umrah Organizer Section located in the office of the Ministry of Religion of Sampang, Kediri and Jombang Regencies, it can be concluded that various government policies regarding The control of the Covid-19 Pandemic is considered and applied to the services of their respective offices. Once when the pandemic peaked the office was closed 100% work from home. Then according to the level, it becomes 25% and 50% work form office.

When the work from office period is enforced, the main administrative activities continue to run such as Hajj registration, hajj portion transfer, portion cancellation and consultation. Other activities related to the administration of Special Hajj and Umrah also continue to run. In addition, socialization and coordination activities are also held both in the office and outside the office in their respective work areas.

One of the very important activities is the guidance of hajj guidance. From the triangulation of interviews and webinar documentation, it is known that the pandemic condition of this activity was stopped because it caused a lot of noise. But then the hajj guidance activity was held again with innovations to take advantage of online devices such as the WhatsApp group application.

Like the Hajj, because the main location of the Umrah procession is Makkah and also Medina Saudi Arabia, the Umrah worship also experienced the same impact, namely the cancellation of the departure of Umrah pilgrims from Indonesia. It's just that during this pandemic, there was a period when departures were reopened, namely from November 1, 2020 – February 3, 2021, but it was closed again. Starting August 10, 2021 or 1 Muharram 1443H has begun to reopen Umrah from abroad for limited countries. And for Indonesia in 2022, it has begun to be allowed to leave starting with strict protocols.

At the opening of the second the Saudi Arabian government more carefully learned from the surge when it opened first. Health protocols are strictly maintained such as pilgrims must complete the covid-19 vaccination dose recognized in Saudi Arabia, attach a vaccination certificate recognized by the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and have been legalized by the Official Authority of the Government of the Country of Origin of the Umrah Congregation. Age must also be 18 years or older. Entry of pilgrims' data into the electronic system no later than 24 hours before arrival in Saudi Arabia. Umrah pilgrims arriving in Saudi Arabia are required to quarantine and the bus capacity is 50% and the hotel room capacity is a maximum of 2 people per room.

Departure of the Hajj Cancellation Dissemination Webinar delivered by the Director of Umrah And Special Hajj Development Nur Arifin via Zoom on October 23, 2021 , it was said

that the Government of Republic of Indonesia has received a diplomatic note from the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia regarding information on the implementation of Umrah worship for Indonesia, namely the granting of permits Indonesian citizens who have Saudi Arabian permission and Indonesian students studying in Saudi Arabia on the condition that they have been vaccinated with a type of vaccine recognized by Saudi Arabia (4 types of vaccines). The Sinovac vaccine has been recognized by the WHO and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but is still required to be vaccinated against boosters. The quarantine in Saudi Arabia is not enforced for congregants who have been injected with 4 types of vaccines, while Sinovac is planned to be in a 5-day quarantine and there are restrictions on activities while in Saudi Arabia.

The acquisition of Indonesian citizens to enter Saudi Arabia above is a breath of fresh air of optimism for Indonesian pilgrims to be able to immediately go to perform Umrah worship. Moreover, in Indonesia, it seems that the trend of the Covid-19 Pandemic has begun to subside and be controlled. However, the Indonesian government is not rash, even very careful not to concede again which results in the distrust of the Saudi Arabian Government. The strategy is still related to health protocols.

Just like Hajj, in Indonesia the absence of Umrah departure also causes psychological and financial impacts on some parties. The impact that occurs in addition to umrah pilgrims who are delayed in departure, also on Umrah Organizing Company (Travel Umrah) who do not get income due to the absence of departure. However, from the triangulation of interviews, webinar documents on the Implementation of Hajj and Umrah and field observations made by researchers, there are still opportunities to survive for Hajj and Umrah Organizing Companies the same as Hajj and Umrah Guidance Group namely by conducting guidance services and online guidance to the pilgrims.

From the triangulation of interview results and webinar documents socialization and dissemination by the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah Organizing and the Head of Hajj and Umrah Organizing, it can be concluded that the Indonesian government at that time had made efforts conducting diplomacy and negotiations so that Indonesia can immediately be allowed to send Umrah pilgrims back. The diplomacy and negotiations are also strengthened by the Umrah management strategy that will be implemented by Indonesia if the departure of Umrah is allowed to return. For this reason, the government, just like Hajj, also conducts socialization to Umrah Implementation Stakeholders so that there is readiness for the implementation of Umrah if it is reopened.

From the triangulation of documentation data, it can be concluded that In addition to spreading optimism, the ranks of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia also socialize the risks faced in the implementation of Umrah during the Covid-19 pandemic to Umrah Stakeholders. This is done as a reflection to be watched out for together, taken into consideration or a solution can be sought both by Umrah pilgrims and by Umrah Organizing Company.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that the government in this case the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia including the Hajj and Umrah Organizing Field of and the ranks below it are serious in conceptualizing and socializing with Hajj and Umrah stakeholders to be able to implementing the Umrah strategy during the Pandemic. This is because if the Indonesian Government is successful in organizing Umrah with zero cases, then this will be the capital of diplomacy so that hajj shipments in Indonesia in 2022 are allowed to return. And this is what happened.

CONCLUSION

From this research, it can be drawn as an illustration of the face of hajj and Umrah implementation in Indonesia during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Indonesia had two years (2020 and 2021) not sending pilgrims based on the consideration of *hifz} al-nafs* (life care) carried out by the governments of the two countries, namely Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. The cancellation is quite understandable for pilgrims and the public because health also includes the limitations of ability in the implementation of Hajj. Meanwhile, the hajj projection for 2022 is still uncertain because it sees the development of the Covid-19 pandemic and the development of diplomacy between the two countries.

Meanwhile, the picture of the Implementation of Umrah in Indonesia is experiencing a phase of closure, temporary opening and then closing for the same reason as the closure of the Hajj. Whereas currently some countries have been allowed for Umrah. Therefore, the government of the Republic of Indonesia continues to conduct diplomacy with the Government of Saudi Arabia so that the Implementation of Umrah is reopened. In addition, the government also conducts socialization through the Ministry of Religion, Directorate General and the ranks below, including the Hajj and Umrah Organizer Field and Section at the Provincial and regional levels to pilgrims and all Umrah Stakeholders. The socialization, in addition to explaining the situation of Umrah conditions, also explained the government's strategy so that the Umrah target of Zero Covid 19 cases could be achieved.

The achievement of the implementation of Umrah with Zero Cases of Covid 19 is one of the important points in diplomacy with Saudi Arabia so that Indonesia can easily gain Saudi Arabia's trust so that the 2022 Hajj can be carried out. And that's exactly what happened.

With the socialization and guidance to all Umrah Stakeholders, zero Covid-19 cases have been achieved, bringing a positive effect on the Indonesian Government's diplomacy for the Delivery of Pilgrims 2022. Similarly, we have established and established good relations between the G2G and the Government of Saudi Arabia to be the entry point for Indonesia to get a larger Hajj and Umrah quota and ease in its requirements.

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