

The Absence of the Islamic Vision within the Regimes of the Muslim World in Handling COVID-19

The Western countries are fighting against the Coronavirus pandemic, and the Islamic world regimes are no exception. They are also struggling with the hundreds even thousands of deaths, due to lack of health care facility, poor handling, as well as the half-hearted policy of lockdown and the incompetence to secure the basic needs of their people. However, there is one thing that is striking in the policies of Muslim rulers in this pandemic, i.e. the absence of Islamic vision in their policies. The lack of Islamic perspective in these various policies is evident in Indonesia and Malaysia, *bangsa serumpun* (nations of the same stock) in Southeast Asia.

In **Indonesia**: the government was in denial and showed nonchalant attitude at first, even a minister said that Indonesia was immune to Coronavirus because the people usually eat *nasi kucing* (cat's rice). Furthermore, the ruling regime was courting disaster by welcoming tourists to Indonesia, paying a YouTuber to promote Indonesian tourism, cutting the airline ticket prices by 50%, and allowing the Chinese foreign workers to keep coming. When the people started to be victims, the slackness in the government's attitude was also very visible. However, even after realizing that it was a state of emergency, the government made a blunder by issuing Government Regulation in Lieu of Law (Perppu) Number 1 of 2020, which showed an atmosphere of oligarchy and tended to protect economy and businesses over caring for the victims of COVID-19. Its solution of more foreign loans and the setting of budget deficit limit to exceed 3% are very much in accordance with the capitalist's approach. The government used the Coronavirus outbreak to justify the preservation of capitalist oligarchy in this largest Muslim country.

Meanwhile in **Malaysia**: the government issued a policy of closing mosques and canceling Friday prayers, with the reason to break the transmission chain of the virus, by preventing crowds or gathering of people. However, this policy has showed a double standard because the crowds of people in markets and shops are not prohibited, and many large offices are still operating. Moreover, what is also striking in this situation is the controversy over the expulsion of a boat full of Rohingya Muslims that supposed to land in Malaysia, by the Royal Malaysian Navy, led to the death of them on the boat due to starvation! Ironically, many praised this action on the grounds that the Rohingya refugees are already too many in Malaysia. The refugees are also considered to likely transmit COVID-19 if they were welcomed into the land of Malaysia. They used the Coronavirus outbreak to justify their actions.

The responses and policies taken by the Muslim rulers in dealing with COVID 19 show how fragile the principle that their secular government built upon is, as well as expose the flaws of the 'principle of nation-state' that encourages them to justify the divisions of the Muslim Ummah and dehumanization based on national policies, as was evident in the expulsion of Rohingya boat by Malaysian government. Instead of serving the people, the principle of these governments is serving the businesses and investors, as seen from the policy in Indonesia issuing Perppu as mentioned above. The states also have no priority in preserving the Islamic Aqeedah and maintaining for *ibaadah* activities in mosque – which are included to the right of every Muslim – by closing mosques without any Islamic consideration.

Indeed, the lack of Islamic perspective in the handling strategies of COVID-19 taken by the regimes of the Islamic world reflects the need for the unity of the Islamic world to overcome this transnational crisis by means of Islamic ideology. This unity will realize to be a

global political institution which authority is to secure the interests of Muslim Ummah upon the adherence to the Deen of Islam, as well as the protection of humanity.

This institution is the Khilafah (Caliphate), which will carry the Islamic vision and paradigm of state. The Islamic vision outlines two very basic roles of state or ruler. **Firstly, the role as “raa’in” (guardian)**, i.e. to manage the affairs of people including the management of public life according to the Shariah. The Prophet (saw) said, «الإمام رَاعٍ وَمَسْنُونٌ» **“The Imam (Khalifah) is a shepherd (guardian) and he is responsible for those is his flocks (people).”** (Narrated by Ahmad and Bukhari). **Secondly, the role as “junnah” (shield)**, i.e. to protect the Ummah as well as liberate the humanity from colonialism in any form. The Prophet (saw) said, «إِنَّمَا الْإِمَامُ جُنَّةٌ يُقَاتِلُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِ وَيَتَّقِي بِهِ» **“The Imam is but a shield from behind whom the people fight and by whom they protect themselves.”** (Narrated by Muslim).

Therefore in Islam, property, blood, and honor of every citizen is the full responsibility of the state. The Prophet (saw) once said: «فَإِنَّ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَأَمْوَالَكُمْ وَأَعْرَاضَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ حَرَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَحَرَمَةِ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا، فِي يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا، لِيَبْلُغَ الشَّاهِدُ الْغَائِبَ» **“No doubt your blood, property, and your honor (chastity), are sacred to one another as is the sanctity of this day of yours in this month of yours. It is incumbent on those who are present to inform those who are absent.”** [Narrated by Bukhari dan Muslim]

By carrying this state function, any neglect and abandonment – which is the characteristic of capitalist secular governments – will never happen. The ruler (Khaleefah) will be the first person to obey the Deen for fear of his Rabb. In dealing with COVID-19, Khaleefah will run the leadership in accordance to the **ultimate objectives of the application of Islamic Sharia (Maqâsid al- Sharîah)** namely:

(1) *Hifdzun ad-diin* (Protection of Religion); to maintain the aqeedah of the Ummah and ensure that all obligations remain upheld, including the *fard kifayah* of congregational prayer at the mosque even with physical restrictions in the society. The state must issue technical procedures for prayers at the mosque during the pandemic, not blindly close all the mosques. Khaleefah will also lead the *tawbat[an] nasûhâ* directly, because there’s a chance that any disaster or affliction happens due to mistakes or sins committed by the Khaleefah and or his people. The Khaleefah must call for repentance and ask forgiveness from Allah (swt) so that the disaster will pass soon.

(2) *Hifdzun an-nafs* (Protection of Life); to protect the lives of the people is a top priority rather than protecting economic stability, since the loss of a Muslim's life is greater than the destruction of the world. The Prophet (saw) said, «لَرَوَالِ الدُّنْيَا أَهْوَنُ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ قَتْلِ مُؤْمِنٍ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ» **“The destruction of the world is lighter on Allah than the unlawful killing of a believer (mu'min).”** (Narrated by an-Nasai and Tirmidhi). During any infectious disease outbreaks, a policy of quarantine or lockdown must be applied as once applied by the Prophet (saw). This method has been applied since the time of the Prophet (saw) to mitigate the spread of the infectious disease to other areas. To ensure that the order was carried out, the Prophet (saw) built a wall around the area contaminated by the disease. He also once warned his people not to approach the areas contaminated by the disease. On the other side, if they are in a place contaminated by the disease, they are prohibited from going out. He (saw) said: «إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ بِالطَّاعُونَ بِأَرْضٍ فَلَا تَدْخُلُوهَا، وَإِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا» **“If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; but if the plague breaks out in a place while you are in it, do not leave that place.”** (Narrated by al-Bukhari).

(3) *Hifdzun Aql* (Protection of Intellect); To provide adequate education and information related to COVID-19 while promoting the importance of faith, knowledge, and repentance in this situation of affliction. On the other hand, the state must protect people from

disinformation and hoaxes that potentially cause anxiety, panic, and chaos amongst the society. The state must have the ability and control against the flow of information circulating in the society, by carrying out "mobilization of thought and spirituality" amongst the Ummah. It is done by elevating the level of Ummah in terms of thought and spirituality with Islam, its beliefs and laws, to be strong in being strong and facing any disasters and challenges; all in order to materialize a strong, noble, and pure Islamic society because of its *taqwa*, as well as having the resilience against any affliction.

(4) *Hifdzun Nasl* (Protection of Offspring); in this situation of lockdown, the strength of Muslim family building will be tested because they are kept in their homes. Aside from individual *taqwa* and the control from the society, the state will continue to promote the values of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* of family life so that mothers always feel safe in educating their children at home. On the other hand, the Khilafah will give strict sanctions for any *zulm* (oppression or unjust acts) within the family such as domestic violence.

(5) *Hifdzun Maal* (Protection of Property): To secure the basic needs of every single citizen of the state. The state will mobilize logistics and food aid from the surrounding area, as well as motivate the Muslims to compete with one another to relieve the burden of their brothers and sisters. During the era of Khaleefah Umar, there was also a policy of delaying the collection of zakat in the face of affliction. Narrated from Yahya ibn Abdurrahman ibn Hatib, "*Umar bin al-Khathab suspended the payment of zakah in the year of ar-Ramadah and he did not send his collectors out. The following year, when Allah (swt) had lifted the famine, he ordered them to go out and collect two years' zakah. He told them to distribute one year's worth, and to bring the other year's worth to him.*". Khaleefah Umar also adopted a policy to suspend *hadd* punishments for theft during the year of ar-Ramadah, because in the condition it was very possible for people to steal and eat something belongs to someone else because they were starving and couldn't find food, and had no other option. The *Sahabah* (Companions) who lived during his era allowed and agreed with Umar's opinion. This is *Al-Ijma' of Sahabah* (consensus of the *Sahaba*) regarding the punishment for theft in particular condition. But, outside of these extraordinary conditions, the Islamic law regarding with theft is different.

Those Muslim rulers should repent to Allah (swt), because their policies are far cry from the ultimate objectives of the application of Islamic Shariah. They must abandon the corrupted, man-made concept of state, which will never deliver anything but tyranny and destruction. The humanity today needs a state that truly cares about humanity, not just material and profit. What humanity needs right now is a Khaleefah who will deal with this disease as the most important humanitarian problem above all other matters, regardless of the people's religion, *madhhab*, and ethnicity. The Khaleefah who will never see it as a utilitarian economic problem or merely statistical figures! The Prophet (saw) said: «مَنْ وَلَّاهُ اللَّهُ» ***"If Allah puts anyone in the position of authority over the affairs of the Muslims, and he secludes himself (from them), not fulfilling their needs, wants, and poverty, Allah will keep Himself away from him, not fulfilling his need, want and poverty."*** (Narrated by Abu Dawood and at-Tirmidhi).

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