

Politics and Processing in The Struggle of Hizbut Tahrir in Malaysia

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Abstract

This research is to describe the political struggle and proselytizing of Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia as a transnational political party. The political movement and proselytizing of Hizbut Tahrir have become a polemic in various countries, especially countries with an Islamic pattern or a majority Muslim population, as is also the case in Malaysia. This investigation is a case study with a qualitative approach. Data collection uses primary data and secondary data, in the form of documentation, mufti fatwa certificates, lists of interview protocols, with a qualitative presentation. Meanwhile, the data analysis used descriptive, phenomenological, and content analysis methods. Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia (HTM) is in the process of making effective use of the internet for peaceful purposes, such as Facebook, the Forum Ummah Online blog and Melayu.com. Apart from that, public demonstrations with the issue of Muslims in Palestine are another tool used by HTM in abortion of new members. HTM also varies significantly between institutions at the expense of PAS and its fee student cohort. However, HTM failed to convince Malaysians to avoid general elections at the national level. The existence of a ban on HTM in Malaysia has affected the space for HTM to move in activities so that this movement tends to be hidden in spreading its understanding.

Keywords: Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia, Politics and Da'wah

Introduction

Lately, the issue of reviving the caliphate system of government in Islamic politics has become a topic of much discussion among some Muslims. Especially since there have been bans in various countries against organizations that proclaim the struggle to re-establish the Islamic caliphate system, namely Hizbut Tahrir (*Party of Liberation*) or the liberation party which is currently based in England (Nuruzzaman, 2017). Historical record that the caliphate system of government was last used in the time of the Ottoman Turks in 1924 in Turkey (Nahdhah, 2017) or known as the Ottoman Islamic kingdom.

The caliphate is also a universal government system that covers the entire Islamic world that integrates religion and politics, so that the state is a political institution as well as a religion. Lately, the bearer of the caliphate system (Hizbut Tahrir) has heated up the international political stage again, a long debate between pros and cons between agreeing or

not with the concept of the Hizbut Tahrir caliphate system, but most countries, do not or still cannot accept Hizbut Tahrir's concept of caliphate because it is not relevant to the current conditions, and there is no concept or system of caliphate as proclaimed by Hizbut Tahrir that succeeds in leading a country

This movement is considered to endanger the stability of the government and also the administration of religion in a country, so that in some countries the existence of Hizbut Tahrir has been banned. As in Indonesia at the beginning, Hizbut Tahrir was recognized and established based on the democratic principle that the people are free to establish organizations or groups as long as they do not conflict with the basic principles of the Indonesian state, which are Pancasila and the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945, meaning that these two philosophies as national ideologies that must held in high esteem.

Hizbut Tahrir was born from the history of the collapse of the Ottoman Turkish government, which at that time made the situation of Muslims increasingly worse since the middle of the 18th century AD, the Islamic world continued to experience decline and decline without a clear direction. Various efforts have been made to prevent or at least to reduce this, but there is no Islamic group that has succeeded in rising up against this reality, Muslims are still worried and backward (An-Nabhani, 2004). Hizbut Tahrir is not a spiritual organization, but rather a political party that aims to rise and raise the spirit of Muslims from a severe decline, free them from ideas, legal systems and laws of blasphemy, and free Muslims from the influence of western culture such as which was delivered earlier. Freeing society from the grip of imperialism and western colonialism, this is in line with the name "*Hizb at Tahrir*" the party of liberation" (Al-Amin et al., 2012). If the shackles of the people can be overcome to return to the life of the Islamic State as revealed by Allah SWT (Hizbut Tahrir Team, 2007). Hizbut Tahrir is an Islamic political party that has the mission of establishing an Islamic Caliphate as one of its biggest agendas. This political party with Islamic ideology has spread to various countries in the world, including in Malaysia and Indonesia, with its jargon which is "Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI)" and Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia (HTM) To Extend Islamic Life (Hayati, 2017).

However, since the entry of this group and its establishment in the 1980s, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia has not made a good contribution to the preaching of Islam and has often become a source of anxiety and division in society. Based on the country's concerns about this group, then in May 2017 the Indonesian government officially dissolved or canceled Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia through the Minister of Politics, Law and Security (Menkopolhukam), this dissolution because the government considered Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia to be dangerous to the government and the country. Parallel what Zuhairi Misrawi said "Hizbut Tahrir is indicative of breaking the brotherhood of religion, race and tribe and causing internal complications"(Misrawi, 2017).

The existence of opposition and prohibition by Muslims and also the government shows that Hizbut Tahrir is still not fully acceptable to Muslims and the government. Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia was established in the 1990s (Osman, 2009). The recruitment of candidate members from Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia was mostly from among students in the early 1990s. Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia is one of the massive ones in political propaganda through mass media and print media, but this movement of Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia is not like in Indonesia which is growing very fast and has branches in every district. The recruitment of candidate members from Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia was mostly from among students in the early 1990s. Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia is one of the massive ones in political propaganda through mass media and print

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Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia is affected by being invisible because it is not permitted at the Malaysian Organizations Registration Department (ROS), but this group moves secretly alias the underground of politics so that it does not spread much to the public quickly, but the group this continues to actively carry out its politics and preaching through magazines, seminars on the caliphate, exercises, demonstrations and studies on the political understanding and ideology of Hizbut Tahrir and so on.

Studies related to Islamic politics, especially about the journey of Hizbut Tahrir in Malaysia are not found much. Based on the researcher's research, there are several studies regarding Hizbut Tahrir in Malaysia. But the study is only limited to basic studies about the history and direction of Hizbut Tahrir in general, while the development of their political movement and da'wah movement in Malaysia is less studied in depth. Therefore, research related to the Hizbut Tahrir movement in Malaysia needs to be done to ensure the true conditions of its existence and dispel the public's stereotyping of Hizbut Tahrir in Malaysia.

Research Method

The research method that will be used in this study is a descriptive method with a case study approach. The case study approach is an empirical inquiry that investigates phenomena in the context of real life when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly visible where multiple sources of evidence are utilized (Yin, 2014). The subjects in this study involved several informants to obtain relevant information, namely Hizbut Tahrir Malaysian politicians, Malaysian Islamic politicians, and religious figures.

The method of data analysis in this study, the researcher used a collection technique from two elements of data, namely Primary data in the form of direct interviews and secondary data, including; documentation, data collection through documentation analysis can provide relevant information to the issues and problems studied (Mulianah & Hidayat, 2021; Sanjaya & Hidayat, 2022). Interviewing, this method uses an interviewer who conducts a detailed interview based on predetermined guidelines. Anything mentioned by the respondents is important data in this study. A relevant response to the extensive and thorough recording of the words by translating and discussing and analyzing what has been recorded. The data was then analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Findings and Discussion

The establishment of Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia

Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia or often abbreviated as HTM. This group has been in Malaysia as early as 1996 AD. The origin of this organization was brought by Malaysian students who were studying in the United Kingdom at the time. In this statement as in the researcher's interview with the following HTM spokesperson:

"Well, at that time there were actually 3 students from Malaysia studying in the UK. There are 3 people who study in England. So after each of them finished their studies, they went back to Malaysia. So they actually studied HT in the UK" (TB 01)

Legally and formally, HTM has not been accepted or recognized by the Malaysian government as an Islamic group that can spread its politics and preaching. Based on the researcher's research and interviews with the spoke sperson of Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia,

basically Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia has submitted four applications to the government. This is so that Hizbut Tahrir can be accepted as an Islamic group just like other Islamic groups to develop Islamic preaching. The rejection of this application without any underlying reason according to Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia following the researcher's interview with the spokesperson of Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia.

"We have already submitted an application, so that Hizbut Tahrir can be accepted as a legitimate group, in fact this is the fourth time we have submitted an application. But it is always rejected by the government (related party: Register of Society) under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior)" (TB 02)

For sure the membership of Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia cannot be known because the system of recruiting members does not have records that can be based on data, many members of Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia are supporters even if they do not participate in management.

The Political Approach of Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia

The establishment of Hizbut Tahrir as a political party by an-Nabhani because he saw the importance of a political party to change the government situation by taking over power from the hands of the colonialists at that time. It is a very basic matter of the establishment of Hizbut Tahrir as an initial step to restore the dignity and dignity of Muslim life. In one of the books written by an-Nabhani, Mafahim Hizbu at Tahrir, In the book it is written "Hizb at-tahrir Hizbun siyasiyun, mabdauhu al-islam (An-Nabhani, 2001). It means Hizbut Tahrir¹ is a political party² with Islamic ideology. Islam as the initial spirit of standing.

Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia's Propaganda Approach

Each Islamic group and Jam'iyah has its own da'wah path, although in different ways, but the final direction is the same, which is to fight to advance Islam itself. The da'wah method carried out by Hizbut Tahrir is by providing education and building society through Islamic tsaqafah (cultural) introduction exercises, providing an understanding of the true Islamic creed. What is more prominent in the preaching of Hizbut Tahrir by changing and straightening the community's view that deviates from western ideas to the provisions of Islam. This is similar to the path taken by Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia in carrying out its preaching, as shown in the following interview excerpt.

"One of the ways of our preaching is through the way of thinking to change the minds of young people who have been deceived by all kinds of culture from the

¹ In the language of tahrir means liberation, hizbut tahrir is the direction of freeing people, not only Muslims, but also the human community as a whole. from servitude to man to submission and servitude to man's god (tahriru an-nasi min __ ibadati an-nasi ila badati rabbi an-nasi) (cf. M. Ismail Yusanto. Hizbut Tahrir Is Not an Inspirer of Terrorism. Jurnal al-Wa'ie p. 28

² In general it can be said that a political party is an organized group whose members have the same ideals and direction. the direction of political parties is also to gain political power and seize political positions in a constitutional way to implement their policies

west. Everything must follow western culture while we as Muslims also have our own culture that must be conveyed to the younger generation of Muslims" (TB 03).

The activities of HTM activities as a whole are activities of a political nature, both before and after taking over activities outside the law of the government or those related to the government. Politics according to HTM is to organize and maintain the affairs of the people in accordance with the laws and rules of Islam. Its activities are not in the educational aspect like madrasahs. His call is not only advice and instructions, but his activities are political, by presenting Islamic ideas and laws to be implemented and realized in the reality of life and government (*Hizbut Tahrir, "Dakwah Islam Pemikiran, Politik, Dan Tanpa Kekerasan,"* 2015).

The Development of Hizbut Tahrir as a Political Movement in Malaysia

HTM is currently growing in Malaysia. While its size is very small compared to larger Muslim organizations and political groups, HTM has emerged as an important Muslim group. Hafidz Abdurrahman notes that the growth of HT in Malaysia is faster than its growth in Indonesia. He noted that by the time he left Malaysia in 2004, HTM had been established in almost all Malaysian states. In addition, HTM has also received public attention due to several actions that have been taken in the past. This is indeed a remarkable performance for a group that just came to public in 2005. Most importantly, HTM gained more support from young, highly educated Malaysian Muslims. This is very puzzling given that HTM's aim of reviving the Khilafah may be seen as romantic and irrational by some circles.

Disappointment with other Islamic organizations is not the only factor that attracts members to HTM. HTM has been able to traditionally successfully use various recruitment strategies for that profit. HTM uses recruitment methods such as the production of various publications. The most important of these publications is *Sautun Nahdah*. This is a weekly pamphlet produced by the group and distributed in mosques throughout the state after the obligatory Friday Prayer. HTM also promotes the sale of group key texts.

These books are often translated in Indonesia and brought to Malaysia by members of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia who are in Malaysia. HTM also leveraged its website, www.mykhilafah.com to attract group interest. This website features daily reporting of various domestic and international news related to the Muslim World. This article is often followed by comments about articles from HTM members

HTM members have effectively utilized the internet for recruitment purposes. HTM members are active bloggers. Indeed, he is also active as a contributor on online forums that are popular among young Malaysian Muslims such as Ummah Online Forum and Melayu.com. In addition, some HTM members also began to take advantage of the increasingly popular networking site, Face Book, to encourage their friends to attend HTM functions. Some HTM members are also part of various groups that are part of Face Book Online groups such as the Hizbut Tahrir group, the Rise of the Khilafah group and the International Khilafah Conference 2007 group. They are also active on the website <https://mykhilafah.com/>

Public demonstrations are another tool used by HTM in recruiting new members. While Islamic and other political groups in Malaysia usually use demonstrations, the nature of HTM demonstrations is unique. At the peak of the Gaza conflict in March 2009, Malaysian Islamic groups and other NGOs began holding demonstrations against Israeli atrocities against Palestinians. Other groups began boycotting American goods for the alleged support that America lent to Israel. However, HTM held a demonstration outside the Ministry of Defense

in Kuala Lumpur asking the Malaysian army to send its forces to defend Palestine. This was an unprecedented move, which attracted huge support for HTM.

Meanwhile, it may be too early to estimate the impact of HTM in Malaysian politics, it makes sense considering the current political development that HTM can grow in number and influence. That HTM recruitment background (young and highly educated) shows the possibility that it will continue to be influential in the future. For many young Malaysian Muslims, HTM is a real alternative to PAS and UMNO as the bearer of true Islam in Malaysia. HTM is now being seen as a serious challenge by PAS and UMNO (Osman, 2009).

HTM also made significant inroads into various institutions at the expense of PAS and its affiliated student groups. The threat from HTM was considered big enough for PAS President Abdul Hadi Awang to warn PAS members about the threat from HTM (Osman, 2009). HTM saw PAS as a fellow Muslim group. However, it did not resist from criticizing his policies in various states that are in power. For example, HTM openly criticized PAS leaders for excluding non-Muslims from Islamic criminal law. HTM thinks that Islamic law was created for all mankind and PAS leaders are confused about this problem.

The HTM verdict has also clearly stated that PAS's use of democracy to revive the Islamic Caliphate is un-Islamic. They have declared the election as un-Islamic and urged Malaysian Muslims not to vote. While HTM did not succeed in convincing Malaysians to avoid the general election at the national level, it had an impact on student elections causing the disappearance of student groups affiliated with PAS.

Challenges and Problems Faced by Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia in Establishing the Group's Goals

The ban on HTM in Malaysia has an effect on HTM's freedom of movement in activities. The Malaysian state government declared this organization as a 'deviant group' and insisted that anyone who follows this pro-caliphate movement will face the law. The Malaysian Ministry of Islamic Religion in Selangor issued a fatwa that the organization deviated through a fatwa under Seskyen 47 (Enakmen Pentadbiran Agama Islam Negeri Selangor Tahun, 2003) even though it was protested, this resulted in several HTM activists being arrested, including the former Spokesman of Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia, Abdul Hakim Othman.

HTM has not been able to move freely in carrying out activities since the fatwa that considers it a deviant group. There is a ban in Indonesia's neighboring country, which strengthens the government to limit HTM's room for movement. Therefore, some HTM activists are doing a covert movement to continue promoting the issue of Khilafah and Islamic Sharia. Even in certain moments such as related to the Palestinian issue and the burning of the Qur'an by Islamophobic groups in Europe make it an issue for them to campaign for the caliphate.

HTM in its movement received a number of accusations, among others, HTM was considered to be only speaking and not doing real action. In principle, HTM presents certain discourses, ideas, ideas or thoughts, but HTM does not only discourse and does not seem to do any actions and actions. Because, Hizbut Tahrir itself was established as a real action at the call of God and until now continues to call on the community to return to Islamic life. HTM is considered only political and does not care about faith, worship and morals.

The assumption appears because of political perceptions that tend to be stereotyped and not understood as required by Islam. Islam outlines politics as the activity of organizing and maintaining all the affairs of the people both inside and outside the country. This kind of political understanding is understood by HTM. Paying attention to the affairs of Muslims is an obligation in order to serve their affairs in accordance with Islamic laws. This is the real

political activity that Islam wants. Then, HTM carried Islamic preaching to uphold Islamic Sharia in an Islamic caliphate institution. Because, only with the uprightness of Islamic Sharia in the institution of the Islamic caliphate

In addition, HTM is considered to disobey the sunnah and hadith of Sunday, then HTM is considered to be a Mu'tazilah movement that tends to use reason alone, rejecting destiny. This is one of the considerations in issuing a Fatwa about HTM as a misguided group in Malaysia. The existence of this kind of view makes Malaysian Muslims see HTM as a dangerous group for Muslims in Malaysia and all activities related to HTM result in violations of the law that result in being arrested and imprisoned by the Malaysian police.

Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia's View of the Government System, Politics, Law and Religious Administrators, in Malaysia.

Apparently, HTM is now seen as a big enough threat to the Malaysian government that the Malaysian Special Branch is now monitoring the group. Some HTM members were arrested but later released in Temerloh, Pahang to distribute copies of Sautun Nahdah leaflets. While HTM is seen as a potential security threat, the Malaysian government has not attempted to ban the party or pressure its members. Many HTM leaders continue to do well in their careers in government-related bodies such as universities. In fact, the Malaysian Government seems to be taking advantage of anti-HTM democratic attitudes and radical discourse to work for the government's profit. HTM called for a boycott of the election having seen the weakening of PAS and its affiliated bodies.

For HTM, the existing election system in Malaysia is a product of democracy which is contrary to HTM's view that democracy is illegal. So that derivatives of democratic instruments such as political parties are illegal and contrary to Islam, even if the party uses Islamic ideology such as PAS party. HTM believes that the regulations issued by the Malaysian government are not in accordance with Islamic Sharia because the government system is still based on democracy.

Islamic Party Members' Views on Hizbut Tahrir Movement in Malaysia

For the leadership of UMNO, HTM is Islam that does not mean a group. However, the fact that HTM is part of a global Islamic party has become the main source of attention for UMNO leaders. Some UMNO members believe that HTM is aided and abetted by foreigners and do the bidding of these foreigners to overthrow the country as discussed with one of the UMNO party members:

"HTM is a political movement that uses religion as a mask to attract people, when they are strong they will overthrow or overthrow the legitimate government and replace it with the caliphate system" (TB 04)

Some members of the party, including the Islamic party, see that in some respects HTM and the Islamic party have similarities when it comes to fighting for Islam such as Islamic Sharia and Muslims. But in a different movement and method, some Islamic parties in Malaysia accept democracy as a tool in fighting Islamic Sharia and this is different from HTM which rejects democracy, including general elections. Therefore, in some cases, HTM and the Islamic party will clash with each other and have different views in addressing the country's situation.

Conclusion

In general, Hizbut Tahrir is more accurately said to be a social organization (Social Organization), because in its movement this group shows more social work to the community than as an Islamic preaching movement. Although in writing they have defined themselves as a political party whose *mabda'* (ideology) is Islam. Politics is his activity and Islam is his philosophy. Nationally, political parties must join the existing system, to convey aspirations and views. There are two methods used by Hizbut Tahrir in fighting for its mission and goals, namely politics and preaching. First, the political path by providing thought education to young people and later continue to become members of Hizbut Tahrir, the second *da'wah* path is by providing religious understanding starting from the basics to higher levels. These two methods are one way to achieve information. doing activities in the middle of the people in order to make Islam an agenda to lead the people to restore the caliphate with the law of God.

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