

Indonesia: Sharia and daily life - Monitoring religious beliefs app, motorcycle taxis

Saturday 1 December 2018, by [TEHUSIJARANA Karina](#), [YOSEPHINE Liza](#) (Date first published: 29 November 2018).

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Fears grow over app to police minorities

The launch of a mobile application that allows members of the public to report beliefs they consider to be misguided or heretical has sparked fears that it could lead to increased persecution of minority groups in the country.

The app, called Smart Pakem (monitoring religious beliefs), was launched by the Jakarta Prosecutors Office (Kejati) and includes features such as a list of forbidden beliefs and banned mass organizations, a directory of fatwas issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and a form to report complaints or information about religious beliefs or sects.

"If there are reports from the public, we can immediately act on them. Before, people needed to write a letter, which was troublesome. Through this application, we will immediately know where the reports come from," Kejati Jakarta assistant for intelligence matters Yulianto said at the app's launch on Thursday as quoted by [kompas.com](#).

National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) commissioner Choirul Anam said the app could potentially lead to the violation of religious freedom.

"[The app] can result in persecution, violence and criminalization," he told The Jakarta Post on Sunday. "It is contradictory to the government's desire to create a culture of mutual respect and tolerance, which is why I have asked the government and the attorney general to take it down."

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Setara Institute researcher Halili Hasan echoed Choirul's sentiments, saying the app further marginalized followers of minority religious beliefs, especially those who adhered to new or indigenous faiths.

"It is not up to the public to decide whether a belief is misguided or not," he told the Post. "The app just serves to widen divisions in communities and legitimizes people who believe it's okay to persecute groups that are outside of the mainstream."

Indonesia has been widely criticized for its failure to protect its minorities, particularly followers of the smaller Islamic denominations considered heretical, such as Ahmadiyah and hundreds of indigenous faiths.

“The launch of the application will make the public more distrustful of one another, increase the potential for horizontal conflict and damage the dialogue about differing religious beliefs that has already started in the community,” Ahmadiyah Indonesia Congregation (JAI) spokesperson Yendra Budiana said.

Attorney General’s Office (AGO) spokesperson Mukri acknowledged that some might find fault with the app but said it was intended to help educate and inform the public about heretical and banned groups.

“You have to understand the philosophy behind the creation of this app. It is meant to educate the public and it is within the AGO’s authority.

“We want to create an inventory to make it easier for the public to check whether a group is banned or not,” Mukri said.

“Also, if someone reports a group through the app, it doesn’t mean that it will be destroyed immediately. It just helps the AGO to investigate further.”

As of Monday morning, the app is still available on the Google Play Store.

A 2004 law gives the AGO the authority to “conduct oversight over religious beliefs that can endanger the community and the country”.

A 2015 regulation further specifies that the AGO can form central, provincial and municipal Pakem teams that are authorized to analyze reports about indigenous faiths and other religious beliefs as well as judge the impact that those faiths have on public order and peace.

In recent months, Pakem teams have been formed in Enrekang, South Sulawesi, Brebes, East Java, and Pematang Siantar, North Sumatra, among other places.

Choirul said the AGO’s role in overseeing religious beliefs should be abolished.

“If the AGO wants to create a peaceful climate, it should not criminalize differences in beliefs and respect the right to be different,” he added.

Halili agreed, saying judging a religious belief or sect was outside the government’s domain.

“What is so wrong about people seeking spirituality in their own way? Pakem teams result in majoritarianism, where the many decide on what is good for the few,” he said.

Mukri said he respected the right of people to criticize the teams, adding that they remained within the AGO’s authority. “We are only applying the authority that is given to us by the law.”

Karina M. Tehusjarana

• *The Jakarta Post*. Jakarta | Mon, November 26, 2018 | 08:44 am:
<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/11/26/fears-grow-over-app-police-religious-minorities.htm>
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Sharia 'ojek' services gaining popularity

Ojek (motorcycle taxis), may be one of the most convenient modes of public transportation for residents in Indonesia's big cities, with the two-wheeled vehicles able to maneuver through the clogged streets.

However, the compact size of a motorcycle, and the close proximity of the driver to the passenger, has concerned some.

Thirty-four-year-old Yofi Cahya Subangga said his wife rode a motorcycle when traveling around the housing complex, although sometimes she prefers to hop on an ojek when traveling further.

As a Muslim family, he explained that they adhered to the belief that members of the opposite sex that are not family are not allowed to touch. Yofi said he preferred his wife, Dhitta FN, not to ride with a male driver.

"We find it hard to find women drivers," Yofi told The Jakarta Post over the phone on Wednesday.

In December last year, Yofi, Dhitta and a group of friends had the idea of creating a ride-hailing app specifically for women.

"It turns out our friends had the same problem," said Yofi, who eventually founded and developed the app.

In April, SheJek launched in Bandung, West Java, where the couple live. The service, which caters specifically to women, as the name implies, implements values in line with Yofi's sharia beliefs.

Drivers, for example, are required to dress in a sharia fashion and wear loose fitting clothes, preferably a long skirt and long headscarf.

"They can wear trousers, but they would still need to wear a long blouse that covers their bottom and a long headscarf," Yofi said, adding that the rules don't apply to users.

The app has gained popularity among Bandung city residents and has spread its reach across Bandung regency and even to neighboring cities such as Jakarta and even Makassar.

The app, however, is not the first of its kind. Surabaya-based Ojek Syari Indonesia, known as Ojesy, is another transportation service catering to women that was established in 2015, according to its website.

Similarly, both services operate from 5 am to 7 pm. However, with Ojesy charging Rp 8,000 (US\$0.55) for the first kilometer and Rp 2,000 for each kilometer thereafter, SheJek charges a lower rate of Rp 5,000 for the first 2 kilometers and Rp 2,000 for each subsequent kilometer.

SheJek's affordable price makes it a popular option among users that have evidently extended beyond the West Java capital, with Yofi noting there are a total of 27,000 registered users so far.

“However, there’s still limited capital, which affects our services, so our app often crashes and malfunctions,” Yofi said.

Despite technical limitations, drivers and users can still communicate and book trips via chat platforms WhatsApp and Telegram. Yofi added that some users were also unfamiliar with app usage and that many preferred to book via chat anyway.

Ummu Tsurayya, 34, had never downloaded the app but knew of the service through WhatsApp groups and has been using it for several months now.

“[I use it] because the drivers are women,” Ummu said, adding that she would still use ride-hailing apps Gojek and Grab for car rides.

Nadia, 31, said although she had downloaded the app, she didn’t use it anymore, since she had forgotten the password. Nadia nevertheless continues to use the service by contacting several drivers whose numbers she has saved from previous trips.

“But you can’t book a trip for an immediate ride. To be safe, it must be [booked] the day before. You can also book via the Telegram group, but it’s the same, it must be the day before,” Nadia said. (mut)

Liza Yosephine

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<http://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2018/11/29/sharia-ojek-services-gaining-popularity.html>
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