

Indonesian Clerics Meet Instagram Management on Blocking Their Accounts



[Antonius Herujiyanto AH15_201118]

Admittedly, many politicians have made use of social media as one of their tools to achieve their political goals. The temptation to block one's account should not, however, have taken place. The robust criticism should not have been an excuse to do so.

In the meantime, however, hundreds of Facebook and Instagram accounts in Indonesia have been blocked for having carried reports or/ and photographs dealing with the 212 movement and/ or the leader of FPI [the Defenders of Islam Front], cleric Rizieq Syihab (HRS).

The latest issue on blocking social media accounts were experienced by two (hard-liner) ulema of FPI, Habib Bahar bin Smith and Habib Hanif bin Abdurrahman Alatas, respectively.

Not only is Habib Bahar the founder of the so-called Defenders of Prophet Muhammad Council [MPR], but he is also the owner and founder of Tajul Alawiyyin pesantren (Islamic boarding school) in Kemang, Bogor. In the meantime, Habib Hanif is the vice-General chairman of FMI [the Islamic Students Front] and the General Chairman of FSI [the Indonesian santri Front]; the both Fronts are the Youth wings of FPI.

In response to the blocking, the two ulema accompanied by FPI members including their lawyer Habib Novel Bamukmin and "witnessed" by regional Mampang police chief, decided to come to the office of Instagram and Facebook in Gatot Subroto Street, Mampang, Jakarta, on Monday (19 November).

Meeting with the representative of Instagram management, Kartika Puspitasari, Habib Bahar demanded her clarification on why his account with its more than 500,000 followers was blocked? He also explained that it had never carried any reports on radicalism.

Asking her why Instagram did not block those accounts carrying hate speeches, insulting cleric Rizieq Syihab, and abusing Islamic teachings, Habib Bahar, who was born in Manado, North Sulawesi, chronologically explained about the beginning of the blocking of his account.

According to him, it took place not long after his recent conducting a live broadcasting with 18,000 viewers in Central Sulawesi. It suddenly disappeared; he could not use it anymore.

He also said that in the live broadcasting he talked and answered the people's questions on religious affairs including telling them to go ahead in a response to their question about their supporting to Jokowi.

Mentioning he would not be bothered if Instagram decided to stay unjustifiable and continue blocking his account, he said that if only one account was blocked, then he would make a thousand of new accounts after that.

Habib Hanif, likewise, said that his account with his hundred thousand followers had been blocked and disappeared for three weeks. It was weird that it took place one day after he held a meeting with Menkopolhukam [Coordinating Political, Legal and Security Affairs Minister] Wiranto and other government officers on Friday (2 November).

Complaining his experience that every time he started uploading his photographs and those of Habib Bahar and Habib Rizieq in Instagram, they would be automatically erased not long after that, he

demanding a clarification about it. Otherwise, Indonesian Muslims would assume that the systemic mass blocking had been orchestrated by the present regime through the Communications and Information Ministry.

In response to their complaints, Kartika Puspitasari expressed her sorry for the inconvenient situation. She also promised to follow it up with the department in question as soon as possible.

Demanding to make sure when she would do so, both Habib Hanif and Habib Bahar expected that their accounts be reopened soon.

Source: Ameera, [arrahmah/2018/11/20/akunnya-dibanned-habib-bahar-dan-habib-hanif-datangi-instagram/](#), "Akunnya dibanned, Habib Bahar dan Habib Hanif Datangi Instagram (Arriving at Instagram and Facebook office Habib Bahar and Habib Hanif demand clarification on blocking their accounts)", in Indonesian, 20 Nov 18.

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