



PAHANG STATE SERMON TEXT

SERIES 12 /2024

SERMON ON SCAM IN UMRAH AND HAJJ

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أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ. وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا. مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ.

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.
اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ.
أَمَّا بَعْدُ،

فَيَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَوْصِيكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ، فَقَدْ فَازَ الْمُتَّقُونَ.

Let us increase our righteousness to Allah the Almighty by doing all that He prescribes and leaving all that He prohibits. May we be blessed by Allah the Almighty in this life and the hereafter.

Dear brothers and sisters,

Hajj and Umrah are compulsory upon Muslims who are able to perform them.

Allah the Almighty says in chapter 2 (surah al-Baqarah) verse 196:

وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ

Which means: “*Complete the pilgrimage and minor pilgrimage for Allah...*”

Many Malaysians are taking the opportunity to perform the Umrah ritual in conjunction with this school holiday season. Umrah pilgrims are actually responding to the call of Allah the Almighty to visit the holy land of Makkah, as He says in Surah al-Hajj verse 27:

وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَىٰ كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ

Which means: “*Call all people to the pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel from every distant path.*”

Dear brothers and sisters,

However, it is quite disheartening when every year we hear news about scams in Umrah and Hajj. According to records from the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC), which is responsible for controlling umrah operator licenses, there were claims totaling RM3.7 million from cases related to umrah scams in 2022, and in 2023 the amount increased to RM9 million.

Fraud in umrah management can occur in several situations. Among them are companies that collect advance money for umrah, but in reality they intend to deceive and do not manage the pilgrims to the holy land at all. Usually these companies are not registered with the authorities, or they may even be using the name of a registered company.

There are also companies that do not have good business management system, have weak financial capabilities and have no emergency plans in managing Umrah and Hajj. Finally, when unforeseen circumstances occur, such as hotel cancellations and unexpected price increases, the company is forced to use the money from other groups of pilgrims, or, most sadly, they run away or remain silent and cancel the group.

Fraud can also occur during the Hajj pilgrimage. There are companies that do not have license as Hajj Pilgrimage Organizers (PJH) from Tabung Haji. They eagerly give confidence that their companies can obtain hajj visas or can bring pilgrims to perform hajj using furada visas or tourist visas. As a result, a handful of pilgrims were stranded at the airport or arrested by Saudi Arabian authorities for not having a visa to perform the Hajj. This failure caused losses of millions of ringgit to the pilgrims.

Remember that the requirement for being able to perform the Hajj is not simply about having the money, but rather it includes obtaining a valid visa or permit to perform the Hajj. Thus, we should not be in a hurry to accept offers that are not yet certain and give space to irresponsible parties to deceive us.

Dear brothers and sisters,

There is also fraud in Hajj pilgrimage by placing unreasonable amount of payment. The cost of a Hajj permit for locals, whether students, workers or Saudi residents, is no less than 3,000 Riyals and the limited number makes the cheap payment questionable. Even more surprising is that there are companies that can offer hundreds or even thousands of vacancies for badal hajj, when in reality each individual can make a badal hajj for only one person. Remember the warning of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) against fraudsters, including in the hadith narrated by Imam Muslim:

وَمَنْ غَشَّنَا فَلَيْسَ مِنَّا

Which means: *"Whoever deceives us is not one of us."*

Apart from this, Muslims are also advised to be careful with payment schemes and donations in the holy land. Besides the obligatory tax, there is no denying the advantages of disbursing money in Makkah and Madinah, but there are too many reports of fraud, including by a few influencers on social media.

Dear brothers and sisters,

Here are several guidelines when intending to perform Hajj and Umrah:

1. Use the services of a reputable and recognized company with a convincing performance. Avoid getting caught up in Hajj scams that recur every year, by ensuring that we only use the services of Tabung Haji or licensed Hajj Pilgrimage Management companies.
2. Avoid getting caught up in offers that are too cheap and unreasonably priced.
3. Ensure that payments are not collected too early and obtain a receipt for the payment.
4. Umrah that is managed privately (D.I.Y) can be carried out by ensuring that all the pillars and obligations of Umrah are known and can be carried out with the guidance of an experienced advisor.

Dear brothers and teachers,

Among the duties that are Fard al-Kifayah (an Islamic legal obligation that is a collective duty of the Muslim community) is performing Hajj and Umrah. Therefore, companies operating Hajj and Umrah play major roles in implementing this obligation. Therefore, the operating company must have good management, sufficient capital and extensive experience to carry out this responsibility. Ensure the capability of each company in handling this trust.

Be wary so that the pilgrims are not mistreated or wronged. Remember the warning from Allah the Almighty in Surah An-Nisa verse 29 which means: “*O believers! Do not devour one another’s wealth illegally, but rather trade by mutual consent.*”

Dear brothers and sisters,

To conclude, in our determination to perform Hajj and Umrah, we must follow the steps that have been stated to avoid becoming victims of fraud. Likewise, hajj and umrah operating companies must carry out their mandate honestly and diligently. May we be eased in our efforts in performing hajj and umrah and be blessed with a *mabrur* (sincerity) hajj and umrah.

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وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ٩٧

بَارِكْ اللَّهُ لِي وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعَنِي وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِمَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، وَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي وَمِنْكُمْ تِلَاوَتَهُ، إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ. أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ لِي وَلَكُمْ، وَلِسَانِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ، وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.