

Fiqh Principles and the Legitimacy of Indonesia's Isbat Session System

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This study aims to examine the sharia legitimacy of the Isbat Session in determining the beginning of the lunar month in Indonesia through the perspective of the fiqh principle of Tasharruf al-Imam 'ala al-Ra'iyah Manutun bi al-Maslahah. The focus of the study is to analyze the normative basis of this principle as a basis for state authority and to test the effectiveness of its implementation in reconciling differences in hisab-rukyaat and realizing the welfare of the people. The study uses empirical qualitative methods with content analysis and critical discourse analysis approaches. Primary data includes official documents from the Ministry of Religious Affairs regarding the results of the Isbat Session for the 2015–2025 period and public responses, while secondary data are sourced from fiqh literature, journals, and related books. The research findings indicate that the Isbat Session has strong sharia legitimacy based on the principle of tasharruf al-imam, where the state acts as ulil amri who ensures the realization of public welfare through collective decisions. Empirically, 82% of the Isbat Session decisions were successfully agreed upon by the government, NU, and Muhammadiyah, proving the forum's effectiveness as a unifying instrument. However, 18% of the differences that occurred – particularly with Muhammadiyah – were caused by fundamental methodological differences

between rukyat bil fi'li (NU) and hisab wujudul hilal (Muhammadiyah). This study concludes that the Isbat Session is a form of Islamic jurisprudence that is valid according to sharia and effective in creating legal certainty and social stability, although further efforts are still needed to embrace the remaining methodological differences.

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji legitimasi syar'i Sidang Isbat dalam penetapan awal bulan Kamariah di Indonesia melalui perspektif kaidah fikih Tasharruf al-Imam 'ala al-Ra'iyah Manutun bi al-Maslahah. Fokus penelitian adalah menganalisis landasan normatif kaidah tersebut sebagai pijakan otoritas negara dan menguji efektivitas implementasinya dalam menyatukan perbedaan hisab-rukyyat serta mewujudkan kemaslahatan umat. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif empiris dengan pendekatan analisis isi dan analisis wacana kritis. Data primer mencakup dokumen resmi Kementerian Agama mengenai hasil Sidang Isbat periode 2015–2025 dan respons publik, sementara data sekunder bersumber dari literatur fikih, jurnal, dan buku terkait. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Sidang Isbat memiliki legitimasi syar'i yang kuat berdasarkan kaidah tasharruf al-imam, di mana negara bertindak sebagai ulil amri yang memastikan terwujudnya kemaslahatan umum melalui keputusan kolektif. Secara empiris, 82% keputusan Sidang Isbat berhasil disepakati bersama oleh pemerintah, NU, dan Muhammadiyah, membuktikan efektivitas forum ini sebagai instrumen pemersatu. Namun, 18% perbedaan yang terjadi –khususnya dengan Muhammadiyah– disebabkan oleh perbedaan metodologis fundamental antara rukyyat bil fi'li (NU) dan hisab wujudul hilal (Muhammadiyah). Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Sidang Isbat merupakan bentuk fiqh realitas yang sah secara syar'i dan efektif menciptakan kepastian hukum serta stabilitas sosial, meski tetap dibutuhkan upaya lebih lanjut untuk merangkul perbedaan metodologis yang masih ada.

INTRODUCTION

Amidst government efforts to create uniformity, the Isbat Session has often become the epicenter of controversy and recurring social disharmony.¹ Historically, differences have arisen between the government and Islamic community organizations in determining the beginning of Ramadan and Shawwal, leading to fragmented religious practices.² This phenomenon is further complicated by the fact that although the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) issued Fatwa Number 2 of 2004, which obliges Indonesian Muslims to obey government regulations, in practice this fatwa has not been fully implemented effectively.³

Empirically, the effectiveness of the Isbat Session in creating legal certainty and social order remains a matter of debate, as the forum is deemed incapable of accommodating all methodological differences and preventing fragmentation in determining the beginning of the lunar month.⁴ Sharp criticism was voiced by Abdul Mu'ti, Secretary General of the Central Executive Board of Muhammadiyah, who stated that the Isbat Session is no longer relevant, given that the position of the moon and other celestial bodies can now be precisely calculated through hisab (calculation), thus potentially wasting state funds.⁵ On the other hand, Adib from the

¹Abu Rokhmad (Director General of Islamic Community Guidance, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia), Institutionalization and Urgency of the Isbat Session, <https://kemenag.go.id/opini/institusionalisasi-dan-urgensi-sidang-isbat-pS3YB>, accessed September 12, 2025.

²Siti Tatmainul Qulub, "A Critical Review of the Itsbat Session Decisions for Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Months in Indonesia from the Perspective of Usul Fiqh," *Al-Ahkam* Volume 25, no. April (2015): 117.

³Indonesian Ulama Council, "Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council Number 2 of 2004 Concerning Determining the Beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dzulhijjah," 2004, 216-220.

⁴Siti Tatmainul Qulub and Ahmad Munif, "The Urgency of Fatwas and Isbat Sessions in Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month in Indonesia," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 16, no. 2 (2023): 423-52, <https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v16i2.929>.

⁵Abdul Mu'ti (General Secretary of Muhammadiyah Central Executive Board) <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2024/03/08/15395081/muhammadiya>

Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance at the Ministry of Religious Affairs emphasized that the urgency of the Isbat Session lies precisely in its function as a deliberative forum involving all stakeholders, so that the resulting decisions have collective legitimacy and legal force as a national reference.⁶ These facts indicate a gap between the ideal of state authority based on public interest and the empirical reality, which has fueled ongoing controversy. This fundamental issue requires a comprehensive study that examines not only technical and administrative aspects but also the philosophical-religious foundations that provide sharia legitimacy to state authority in determining the beginning of the lunar month.⁷

In recent years, studies of the isbat (confirmation of the crescent moon) sessions discussing the determination of the beginning of the lunar month in Indonesia have generally focused on four main perspectives. First, research focuses on the astronomical and technical aspects of determining the crescent moon, such as visibility criteria, ijtimak (concurrence of the crescent moon), and comparisons of hisab (calculation) systems (Ilyas⁸; Rohmah⁹; Irfan & Anwar¹⁰; Fitriyani et al¹¹). Second, studies analyze the Isbat Session as a mechanism for

[h-sarankan-kemenag-tak-gelar-sidang-isbat-karena-hanya-buang](#), accessed on September 12, 2025.

⁶Adib (Director of Islamic Religious Affairs and Sharia Guidance (Urais-Binsyar)), <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-7234366/penjelasan-kemenag-kenapa-perlu-sidang-isbat-awal-ramadan> accessed on September 12, 2025.

⁷. Tolkah, Muhammad Nurkhanif, and Mohd Hafiz Safiai, "Digital Hilal Observation: Evaluating the Authenticity of Hilal Testimonials in Indonesia Using the Digistar-6 Planetarium System," *International Journal of Religion* 5, no. 6 (May 2, 2024): 947–70, <https://doi.org/10.61707/yvxx1v72>.

⁸Muhammad Ilyas, "Visibility of the New Moon: Astronomical Predictability," 51, no. 2 (1978): 58–68.

⁹Nihayatur Rohmah, "Ijtimak as a Prerequisite for the New Moon in the Hijri Calendar," *Al-Mikraj: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2020): 80.

¹⁰Irfan Arwan, "Comparative Study of Fazilet Calendar and Mabims Criteria on Determining the Hijri Calendar," *Al-Hilal: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 5, no. 1 (2023): 99–116, <https://doi.org/10.21580/al-hilal.2023.5.1.13760>.

¹¹Astrie Octasari Fitriyani, Isfihani, "Implications of the New Rukyat Mabims Imkanur Criteria for the Unification of the Early Month of the Lunar Month in Indonesia," 7, no. 2 (2024): 462–82, <https://doi.org/10.58824/mediasas.v7i2.197>.

conflict resolution and collective ijtihad (Fadholi¹²; Nufus¹³; AM Suhar et al¹⁴; Qulub & Munif¹⁵). Third, institutional and organizational dynamics examine the roles and interactions of religious organizations and government authorities in the session process (Alamsyah et al¹⁶; Indayanti¹⁷; Muslifah¹⁸). Fourth, normative-theological studies that discuss the sharia basis of determining the beginning of the month

¹²Ahmad Fadholi, "The Urgency and Dynamics of the Isbat Session," 4, no. 2 (2019): 147-69.

¹³Khaerun Nufus, "The Isbat Session for Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month from an Islamic Law Perspective," *Inklusif* 3, no. 1 (2018): 1-20.

¹⁴A. M. Suhar et al., "Collective Ijtihad Practice In Indonesia: The Role of Isbat Sessions in Addressing Legal Paradigm Differences Between Hisab and Rukyat," *Al-Risalah: Forum for Legal and Social Studies* 24, no. 2 (2024): 105-23, <https://doi.org/10.30631/alrisalah.v24i2.1537>.

¹⁵Qulub and Munif, "The Urgency of Fatwas and Isbat Sessions in Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month in Indonesia." p. 423.

¹⁶Afifah Mulya Alamsyah and Muhammad Ihtirozun Ni'am, "Dynamics of Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month by Nahdatul Ulama: Before and After the Formulation of Imkan Rukyat Criteria," *Astroislamica: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 4, no. 1 (2025): 62-78, <https://doi.org/10.47766/astroislamica.v4i1.5241>.

¹⁷Wiwik Indayati, "Addressing the Diversity of Rukyat Calculations of Community Organizations in Indonesia," *AL - AFAQ: Journal of Astronomy and Falak* 3, no. 2 (2022): 131-42, <https://doi.org/10.20414/afaq.v3i2.4771>.

¹⁸Siti Muslifah, "Efforts to Address Differences in Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month in Indonesia," *Azimuth: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 1, no. 1 (2020): 74-100, <http://jurnalafh.uinsby.ac.id/index.php/azimuth/article/view/788>.

through the maqashid sharia approach or fiqh rules (Idrus¹⁹; Jamrudin²⁰; Rahman et al²¹; Qulub²²).

However, the majority of previous studies are still fragmented in technical-astronomical, historical-organizational, or normative-textual approaches partially, without integrating an in-depth analysis of the sharia legitimacy of state authority through the fiqh rule of tasharruf al-imam manutun bi al-maslahah in the empirical context of the Isbat Session. In fact, the study of this aspect is very important because it presents an integrative perspective that positions the Isbat Session not only as an administrative mechanism, but also as a sharia practice that has a strong philosophical and Islamic legal basis applied in the practice of determining the beginning of the lunar month by the Indonesian government based on the principle of benefit. Therefore, this research is present to fill this academic gap by conducting an in-depth analysis of the sharia legitimacy of the Isbat Session through the perspective of the fiqh principle of tasharruf al-imam manutun bi al-maslahah.

This article examines the sharia legitimacy of the Isbat Session through the perspective of the fiqh principle of tasharruf al-imam manutun bi al-maslahah. Specifically, this article conducts an in-depth analysis of how this fiqh principle serves as the sharia basis for the government's authority in determining the beginning of the lunar month, thus confirming the position of the Isbat Session not merely as an administrative procedure, but as a religious practice with strong philosophical and juridical foundations in the Islamic legal tradition. Based on this, two research questions can be formulated as follows: First, how does this fiqh principle serve as the sharia basis for the authority of the Isbat Session? Second, to what extent is its

¹⁹Achmad Musyahid Idrus, "State Leadership Policies from the Perspective of Islamic Jurisprudence Principles: Tasarruf Al-Imam Manutun Bil Maslahah," *Al Daulah: Journal of Criminal and State Law* 1, no. 1 (2021): 123, <https://doi.org/10.24252/ad.v1i1.26278>.

²⁰Ade Jamarudin, "Isbat Ramadhan in the Perspective of the Qur'an," *Madania: Journal of Islamic Sciences* 8, no. 1 (2006): 83-108, <http://ejournal.uin-suska.ac.id/index.php/madania/article/view/5425>.

²¹Fathor Rahman, Pujiono Pujiono, and Siti Muslifah, "Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month for Worship," *Fenomena* 12, no. 2 (2020): 107-38, <https://doi.org/10.21093/fj.v12i2.2264>.

²²Siti Tatmainul Qulub, "A critical analysis of the itsbat court decision on determining the beginning of the lunar month in Indonesia from the perspective of ushul fiqh.", p. 119.

implementation effective in reconciling differences in hisab-rukyat and achieving the welfare of the community? This research is expected to provide a conceptual framework that strengthens the religious legitimacy and effectiveness of the Isbat Session in realizing the unity of the Islamic calendar in Indonesia. These findings will contribute to the development of contemporary *siyasa fiqh* and provide practical policy recommendations for relevant authorities.

The Isbat Session, as a mechanism for determining the beginning of the lunar month by the Indonesian government, has a strong foundation of sharia legitimacy through the *fiqh* principle of *tasharruf al-imam manutun bi al-maslahah*, which emphasizes that the leader's policies in managing public affairs must be oriented towards the public good. This principle authorizes the state to make decisions that reconcile methodological differences in determining the beginning of the month, considering that protracted conflicts can disrupt the unity of the community and social stability. Operationally, the implementation of this principle in the Isbat Session has proven effective because it combines a normative approach (involving Islamic scholars and mass organizations) with an empirical one (*hisab* data and *rukyat* reports), so that the resulting decision is not only valid according to sharia but also responsive to factual conditions.

However, its effectiveness in reconciling differences in *hisab-rukyat* still faces challenges due to diverse interpretations of the criteria for crescent visibility and the existence of methodological schools that remain independent. Based on the argumentative framework, it can be concluded that the Isbat Session does have strong sharia legitimacy through the *tasharruf al-imam* principle, but its effectiveness in achieving full unity still requires strengthening through the socialization of agreed criteria, improving the quality of human resources, and optimizing the role of *ulama* as mediators in resolving methodological differences for the realization of optimal public welfare. Thus, this study not only provides an academic contribution to the development of contemporary *fiqh siyasa*, but also offers practical solutions for strengthening the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Isbat Session in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research is an empirical qualitative research that examines the sharia legitimacy of the Isbat Session through the perspective of

Islamic jurisprudence, with primary data taken from official documents of the results of the Isbat Session to determine the beginning of Ramadhan, Shawwal, and Dzulhijjah published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia as well as public responses and responses recorded in mass media reports, video recordings, and interviews with representatives of Islamic organizations regarding the decision of the session, while secondary data is obtained from books, journal articles, and academic literature that discuss the Isbat Session, determining the beginning of the lunar month, and the Islamic jurisprudence principle of *tasharruf al-imam manutun bi al-maslahah*. These data were collected through documentation techniques and content analysis of official archives and relevant publications.

The data selection process was carried out by selecting official documents resulting from the Isbat Session from the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs specifically for determining the beginning of Ramadhan, Shawwal, and Zulhijjah during the period that gave rise to polemics, as well as sorting out published public responses from religious organizations and media reports. The selected data were then categorized based on key themes, such as the basis for the determination argument, the astronomical criteria used, the form of response (acceptance or rejection), and the reasons for it. The data were presented in the form of an analytical narrative supplemented by tables to map the patterns and trends of the session results and their responses. Data analysis was carried out using content analysis and critical discourse analysis, where the data were interpreted through the perspective of the *fiqh* principle of *tasharruf al-imam manutun bi al-maslahah* to test consistency, sharia legitimacy, and the achievement of *maslahah*, by triangulating sources and methods to maintain the validity of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Fiqh Rules of Tasharruf Al-Imam as The Basis of Sharia

The principle of *Tasharruf al-Imām ‘alā al-Ra’iyyah Manūṭun bi al-Maşlahah* is a *fiqh* principle which states that every policy or action taken by a leader, whether a ruler, judge, or anyone with authority, must depend on and be directed to realizing the benefit of the people he leads.²³ Etymologically, the word *tasharruf* means action or policy,

²³Ali Ahmad Al-Nadwi, *Al-Qawa'id Al-Fiqhiyah*, (Beirut: Dar al-Qalam, Cet. V, 2004), p. 24.

al-Imām refers to a leader who is a role model, al-Ra'iyah is the people under his protection, manūṭun means “depending on”, and al-maṣlaḥah means goodness or benefit that is free from harm.²⁴ This principle emphasizes that leaders act as public servants who are obliged to prioritize public interests above personal or group interests, and act fairly in every decision.²⁵ The main goal is to achieve maqāṣid al-syarī'ah which includes protection of religion, soul, mind, lineage and property.²⁶ Thus, this rule becomes an ethical and legal guideline for leaders in exercising their power for the sake of realizing shared prosperity.

The fiqh principle of Tasharruf al-Imām 'alā al-Ra'iyah Manūṭun bi al-Maṣlaḥah states that the policies of leaders, whether government, judges, or religious authorities, must always be oriented towards realizing the public good, which includes protecting religion, life, intellect, descendants, and property.²⁷ For example, in the context of the prohibition of interfaith marriage, the Constitutional Court through Decision Number 24/PUU-XX/2022 emphasized that the policy was taken to prevent potential theological conflicts, household instability, and disruption to children's religious education, thus aligning with the principles of *hifz ad-dīn* (protecting religion) and *hifz an-nasl* (protecting descendants).²⁸

Meanwhile, in the policy of determining the cost of Hajj through Presidential Decree Number 7 of 2023, the Government seeks to balance the financial burden on pilgrims with the sustainability of benefit funds, although it is considered not to have fully achieved optimal benefits because it is not accompanied by a rejection of mafsadah (damage) that arises, such as the failure of some prospective

²⁴Ibrahim Aris, Abd al-Halim Muntashir, et al, *al-Mu'jam al-Wasith*, (Cairo: Majma' al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah, 1972), p. 545.

²⁵Abd al-Karim Zaidan, *Al-Wajiz Fi Syarh Al-Qawa'id Al-Fiqhiyyah*, (Beirut: Muasasah Ar-Risala, Cet. I, 2001), p. 122.

²⁶Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Al-Mustashfa Min 'Ilm Al-Ushul*, (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, 2022), p. 287.

²⁷Ali Ahmad Al-Nadwi, *Al-Qawa'id Al-Fiqhiyyah*, p. 24.

²⁸Achmad Fausi and Jaih Mubarak, "Leadership Jurisprudence and Interfaith Marriage: Contextualization of the Rules of Ta Tasarruf al-Im 'ala' al-Ra'iyah Manu'ṭun bi al-Maṣlaḥah", *Comparative: Journal of Comparative Law and Islamic Thought* Volume 3, Number 2, December 2023 E-ISSN: 3026-1643 (2023).

pilgrims to pay the costs.²⁹ The implementation of this principle is also reflected in the isbat session to determine the beginning of the lunar month in Indonesia, where the Government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs acts as a leader who ensures that decisions are based on the rukyat and hisab methods to achieve unity in worship, avoid divisions, and protect the welfare of the community in carrying out fasting and Eid al-Fitr.³⁰

The principle of the fiqh rule Tasharruf al-Imām 'alā al-Ra'iyah Manūṭun bi al-Maṣlahah (the leader's policy towards his people must be related to the public interest), every decision issued by the government (as an imam or ulil amri) must be oriented towards realizing the public interest (maslahah 'ammah).³¹ This rule is applied in the context of determining the beginning of the lunar month in Indonesia through the Isbat Session held by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.³² In this forum, the government acts as a facilitator and final decision maker by combining hisab data (astronomical calculations) and rukyat reports (crescent moon observations) from various regions, with the main aim of creating legal certainty, maintaining the unity of the community, and preventing society from being divided due to differences in determination methods.³³ The implementation of this principle is supported by other derivative principles, such as Hukmul hākim yarfa'ul khilāf (the ruler's decision can raise differences of opinion) which gives the government the authority to make a binding decision to resolve differences of opinion at the practical level, as well as Ittibā'ul ahwana fil amrayn (taking the lighter of two matters) which underlies the government's consideration in choosing the imkanur

²⁹Khairazka Essaura Et AL., "Review of the Principle of Tasharruf Al-Imam 'Ala Ar-Ra'iyah Manuthun Bi Al-Maslahah in Determining Hajj Costs (Analytical Study of Presidential Decree Number 7 of 2023)," *Journal of Legal and Policy Innovation* 5, no. 4 (2024): 304–22, <https://ejournals.com/ojs/index.php/jihk>.

³⁰Siti Tatmainul Qulub and Ahmad Munif, "The Urgency of Fatwa and Isbat Sessions in Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month in Indonesia," *Journal of Islamic Community Guidance* 16, no. 2 (2023): 423–52, <https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v16i2.929>.

³¹ Al-Suyuthi, Jalaluddin. Al-Ashbah wa al-Naza'ir. p. 83.

³²Siti Tatmainul Qulub and Munif, "The Urgency of Fatwas and Isbat Sessions in Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month in Indonesia."

³³Wiwik Indayati, "Addressing the Diversity of Rukyat Hisab of Community Organizations in Indonesia," *AL-AFAQ: Journal of Astronomy and Falak Science* 3, no. 2 (2022): 131–42, <https://doi.org/10.20414/afaq.v3i2.4771>.

rukyyat criteria as a middle way between the hisab method and pure rukyyat, for the sake of realizing broader and common good and maintaining social stability.³⁴

The principle of the fiqh rule Tasharruf al-Imām 'alā al-Ra'iyah Manūṭun bi al-Maṣlahah essentially provides a clear sharia mandate to the government (as imam or ulil amri) to take strategic policies in matters that are not regulated technically and in detail by the texts, but have a broad impact on the public interest. In the context of determining the beginning of the lunar month, although the texts establish the basic principles of rukyyatul hilal, they do not explain the technical mechanism for determining it uniformly for a modern country with a large and dispersed Muslim population³⁵. Therefore, the government's authority to hold an Isbat (confirmation) meeting, as a policy (tasharruf), stems directly from the essence of this principle. The Isbat session is a concrete manifestation of this authority, where the state acts as a facilitator, decision-maker, and guarantor of certainty for a decision with national implications, with the primary focus being the creation of the public interest (maslahah ammah).

Government intervention through the Isbat Session is essential because the Ramadan fast and the Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha holidays are essentially collective acts of worship, the value and social impact of which are realized when performed simultaneously by the Muslim community. This principle is the fundamental basis for why the government is not only permitted but must intervene. Without a unifying decision from a recognized authority, these collective acts of worship have the potential to cause division, confusion, and social conflict, which are in fact contrary to the objectives of sharia itself. Therefore, the Isbat Session is not a form of state intervention in the purely religious realm, but rather an implementation of the state's responsibility to ensure that the implementation of these communal acts of worship takes place in an orderly, harmonious manner, and

³⁴Al-Suyuthi. Al-Ashbah wa al-Naza'ir; Rahman. Fiqh Principles. p. 71.

³⁵Khaerun Nufus, "Isbat Session to Determine the Beginning of the Lunar Month from an Islamic Law Perspective," Inclusive 3, no. 1 (2018): 1-20.

brings benefits to all Muslims, which is the essence of the principle of tasharruf imam.³⁶

Legal Basis for the Implementation of the Isbat Session in Indonesia

The isbat session in determining the beginning of the lunar month, especially Ramadhan and Shawwal, refers to the word of Allah in Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 185, which states, "Therefore, whoever among you is present (in the country where he lives) in that month, then fast,"³⁷ as well as the Hadith of the Prophet Al-Bukhari and Muslim from Ibn Umar which states, "Fast because you see the new moon and stop fasting because you see the new moon. If it is hindered by clouds, then complete the month of Sha'ban to thirty days."³⁸ These two propositions confirm the principle of rukyatul hilal (observation of the crescent moon) as a method for determining the beginning of the Hijriyah month. In Indonesia, the implementation of this principle is facilitated through the isbat session held by the Religious Court based on Article 52A of Law Number 3 of 2006. This session functions to verify the testimony of the crescent moon in accordance with Islamic law and science, thus producing a decision that is used as a basis by the government in officially determining the beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Dzulhijjah, bridging between religious provisions and national legal certainty.³⁹

Based on current practice in Indonesia, the isbat (creation verification) session to determine the beginning of lunar months such as Ramadan and Shawwal fulfills several substantive and procedural requirements. Institutionally, this session is organized by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs and led directly by the Minister of Religious Affairs or a designated official, involving judges from the Religious Courts who lead the session and verify testimonies, as well as a hisab and rukyat committee consisting of astronomy

³⁶Astrie Octasari Fitriyani, Isfihani, "Implications of the New Rukyat Mabims Imkanur Criteria for the Unification of the Early Month of Kamariah in Indonesia" 7, no. 2 (2024): 462-82, <https://doi.org/10.58824/mediasas.v7i2.197>.

³⁷Al-Quran, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2016, Surah Al-Baqarah (2): 185.

³⁸Narrated by Bukhari no. 1907 and Muslim no. 1080, from Abdullah bin Umar.

³⁹Law of the Republic of Indonesia, "Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 3 of 2006 Concerning Amendments to Law Number 7 of 1989 Concerning Religious Courts" (Indonesia: Republic of Indonesia, 2006).

experts (hisab) and a team of crescent-sighting observers (rukyat).⁴⁰ Substantively, the main requirement is the receipt of a crescent-sighting report from observers who meet sharia criteria, namely being a Muslim, mature, sane, and trustworthy, and supported by accurate hisab (astronomical calculation) data regarding the position of the crescent (hilar).⁴¹ If the crescent is not visible or the testimony is questionable, *istikmal* (refinement of the month to 30 days) is performed. The results of this session are then stipulated in a nationally binding decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs, thus combining sharia, scientific, and positive law aspects in one forum.

The Isbat Session Process as a Realization of Al-Maslahah

The isbat (consensus) session is a concrete manifestation of efforts to realize the public good (*maslahah 'ammah*), particularly in uniting Indonesian Muslims in the implementation of worship. The isbat meeting, held by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, serves as a deliberative forum that collects hisab (astronomical calculations) data and rukyat (crescent moon sighting) reports from across Indonesia to determine the beginning of the lunar month, thereby providing legal certainty and preventing confusion and division among the public.⁴² This process involves various parties such as the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), Islamic organizations, astronomers, and related agencies, reflecting the principle of *shura* (consensus) and prioritizing collectivity in decision-making.⁴³ The isbat session decisions announced by the government, although not binding, are intended to foster togetherness in worship such as the

⁴⁰Sejarah sidang isbat di Indonesia, <https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/sejarah-sidang-isbat-di-indonesia.html> diakses pada tanggal 3 Oktober 2025.

⁴¹Sidang Isbat, Wikipedia, https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidang_isbat, diakses pada tanggal 3 Oktober 2025.

⁴²Siti Tatmainul Qulub and A. Munif, "The Urgency of Fatwas and Isbat Sessions in Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Months in Indonesia." p. 433.

⁴³The Isbat Session Remains a Maslahah Method in Determining the Beginning of the Hijri Months, <https://www.risalahnu.com/8790/2024/11/29/sidang-isbat-masih-jadi-metode-maslahah-dalam-penentuan-awal-bulan-hijriah/>, accessed October 3, 2025.

Ramadan fast and Eid al-Fitr, in accordance with the essence of the *maqashid sharia* (observation of religion, soul, and mind).⁴⁴ Thus, the *isbat* session is not only a technical means of determining the crescent moon, but also a socio-religious instrument that strengthens Islamic brotherhood and emphasizes the state's responsibility in facilitating the welfare of the people.

Based on the principle of the Islamic jurisprudence rule *Tasharruf al-Imām 'alā al-Ra'iyah Manūṭun bi al-Maṣlaḥah* (the leader's policy towards his people must be related to the public interest), the implementation of the *isbat* session to determine the beginning of the lunar month by the Indonesian Government is a real implementation of this rule. As a representative of the imam (leader), the Minister of Religious Affairs has adopted a policy of holding an *isbat* session that considers and combines objective *hisab* (astronomical calculation) data and *rukyat* (crescent moon observation) reports from various locations, with the primary goal of realizing the common good (*maslahah 'ammah*) in the form of community unity, legal certainty, and ease of worship. This policy does not favor any particular method or organization, but is focused on efforts to unite differences and prevent divisions within the Indonesian Muslim community, which is fully in line with the essence of the principle that every action of the ruler must be based on considerations of the welfare of his people.⁴⁵

The results of the *isbat* (crescent sighting) sessions are generally accepted by the majority of Indonesian Muslims as they are seen as a government effort to achieve the common good, namely maintaining unity and legal certainty in the implementation of worship.⁴⁶ The *isbat* session's decision, which combines the *hisab* (astronomical calculation) and *rukyat* (crescent sighting) methods, is accepted as an official guideline that reassures the community amid differences of opinion, especially when the position of the crescent moon allows for

⁴⁴Nur Asiah, et al., "Maslahah According to Imam Al Ghazali's Concept," *DIKTUM: Jurnal Syariah dan Hukum* 18, no. 1 July 2020 (2020): 118-28, <https://ejurnal.iainpare.ac.id/index.php/diktum/article/view/663/750>.

⁴⁵Siti Tatmainul Qulub, "Critical review of the decision of the *itsbat* trial to determine the beginning of the lunar month in Indonesia from the perspective of *ushul fiqh*," p. 118.

⁴⁶Mu'ammam & Muslich Shabir "Government Authority on Worship: A Solution to the Problem of Determining the Beginning of Ramadan and Shawwal." *Jurnal Ibtida*, 3(1), (2022), 18-32.

agreement, such as when the crescent moon reaches an altitude of more than 3 degrees⁴⁷.

However, in some cases, government decisions are rejected by groups such as Muhammadiyah, which consistently uses the hisab wujudul hilal method, because they are considered inconsistent with their calculations, which prioritize the wujudul hilal even though it is not visible through rukyat. ⁴⁸This rejection shows that although the isbat session aims for the public good, in practice there are still methodological differences that are difficult to fully harmonize. The isbat session has also drawn opposition from several parties who question its budget efficiency. The budget, reaching billions of rupiah, is considered too large and burdens state finances for a decision that is ultimately still often ignored by some groups. This criticism highlights that such a large amount of funds is not commensurate with the results, considering that differences in determining the holiday continue to recur.⁴⁹

For further details, the following is a description of the data on the results of the Isbat trial over a period of more than 1 decade:

⁴⁷Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Why is an Isbat Session Necessary for the Beginning of Ramadan, Shawwal, and Zulhijjah?, <https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/kenapa-perlu-sidang-isbat-awal-ramadan-syawal-dan-zulhijjah-ini-penjelasan-kemenag-7x8Mb>, accessed on October 3, 2025.

⁴⁸ Islami.co. Loud Voices During the Isbat Session: What Happened?, <https://islami.co/suara-lantang-di-tengah-sidang-isbat-apa-yang-terjadi/>, accessed October 3, 2025.

⁴⁹ Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia: Itsbat Costs 1.425 Billion, Not 9 Billion, <https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/biaya-itsbat-1425-juta-bukan-9-miliar-gilqkw>, accessed October 3, 2025.

Table 1.
Isbat Session Results Data from 2015-2025⁵⁰

| Year (H/M) | Moon | Height of the Crescent Moon (Hilal) from Papua-Aceh | Ruky at Results | Isbat Session Decisions | Information (Similarities/Differences with Mass Organizations) |
|---------------|----------|---|-----------------|-------------------------|--|
| 1436 H/2015 M | Ramadhan | -2°32' | Not visible | 18 June 2015 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |
| 1436 H/2015 M | Shawwal | 3,11° | Visible | 17 July 2015 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |
| 1437 H/2016 M | Ramadhan | 2,36° until 3,93° | Visible | 6 June 2016 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |
| 1437 H/2016 M | Shawwal | -0°78' | Not Visible | 6 July 2016 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |
| 1438 H/2017 M | Ramadhan | 6,81° until 8,36° | Visible | 27 May 2017 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |
| 1438 H/2017 M | Shawwal | 2,14° until 3,65° | Visible | 25 June 2017 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |

⁵⁰The Isbat Session Result Data was taken from the Official Website of the Indonesian Ministry of Religion <https://kemenag.go.id/>, supported by crescent height data from BMKG <https://hilal.bmkg.go.id/>, as well as the Official NU website <https://www.nu.or.id/tag/isbat> and Muhammadiyah <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/>.

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--|
| 1439 H/ 2018 M | Ramadh an | -1,36° until 0,2° | Not Visibl e | 17 May 2018 | Same as NU and different from Muhammadiyah |
| 1439 H/ 2018 M | Shawwa l | 6,08° until 7,64° | Visibl e | 15 June 2018 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |
| 1440 H/ 2019 M | Ramadh an | 4,52° until 5,75° | Visibl e | 6 May 2019 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |
| 1440 H/ 2019 M | Shawwa l | -1,43° until - 0,06° | Not Visibl e | 5 June 2019 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |
| 1441 H/ 2020 M | Ramadh an | 2,70° until 3,76° | Visibl e | 24 April 2020 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |
| 1441 H/ 2020 M | Shawwa l | 6,34° until 7,88° | Visibl e | 24 May 2020 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |
| 1442 H/ 2021 M | Ramadh an | 2,62° until 3,66° | Visibl e | 13 April 2021 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |
| 1442 H/ 2021 M | Shawwa l | -5,61° until - 4,37° | Not Visibl e | 13 May 2021 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |
| 1443 H/ 2022 M | Ramadh an | 1,12° until 2,19° | Not Visibl e | 3 April 2022 | Same as NU and different from Muhammadiyah |
| 1443 H/ 2022 M | Shawwa l | 3,79° until 5,57° | Visibl e | 2 May 2022 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--|
| 2022 M | | | | | |
| 1444 H/ 2023 M | Ramadh an | 6,78° until 8,73° | Visibl e | 23 March 2023 | Same as NU & Muhammadiyah |
| 1444 H/20 23 M | Shawwa l | 0,75° until 2,36° | Not Visibl e | 22 April 2023 | Same as NU and different from Muhammadiyah |
| 1445 H/ 2024 M | Ramadh an | -0,33° until 0,87° | Not Visibl e | 12 March 2024 | Same as NU and different from Muhammadiyah |
| 1445 H/ 2024 M | Shawwa l | 4,88° until 7,63° | Visibl e | 10 April 2024 | Same as NU and Muhammadiyah |
| 1446 H/ 2025 M | Ramadh an | 3,02° until 4,69° | Visibl e | 1 March 2025 | Same as NU and Muhammadiyah |
| 1446 H/ 2025 M | Shawwa l | -3,29° until - 1,07° | Not Visibl e | 31 March 2025 | Same as NU and Muhammadiyah |

Based on data from the isbat (Isbat) session over the past 10 years (2015-2025), it can be concluded that the government, through the isbat session mechanism, has consistently sought to unify the determination of the beginning of Ramadan and Shawwal by combining the hisab and rukyat methods. The majority of isbat session decisions (18 of 22 determinations) were successfully agreed upon by the government, NU, and Muhammadiyah. This occurs when the astronomical height of the crescent moon reaches or exceeds the criteria for imkanur rukyat (usually above 2-3 degrees), or when the crescent moon is below the horizon so that all parties agree to perform istikmal (complete the month to 30 days).⁵¹ However, within the 10-year period, there were four discrepancies between the government's and Muhammadiyah's

⁵¹Nihayatur Rohmah, "Ijtima'k as a Prerequisite for the New Moon in the Hijri Calendar," *Al-Mikraj: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2020): 80.

decisions, namely in Ramadan 2018, Ramadan 2022, Shawwal 2023, and Ramadan 2024. All of these differences occurred when the height of the crescent moon was at a critical position (between -1.36° to 2.19°), where the government and NU decided not to see the crescent moon (istikmal) while Muhammadiyah, which was guided by the hisab wujudul hilal, still determined the beginning of the new month because the crescent moon was considered to have appeared above the horizon.⁵² This pattern confirms that the root of the differences lies not in different astronomical data, but in the different determination methodologies adopted by each party.

Efforts to address the differences in determining the beginning of the lunar month between Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah involve the government's role as a mediator through the holding of Isbat Sessions that combine the hisab and rukyat methods to create national certainty.⁵³ NU, which adheres to the principle of rukyat bil fi'li with the imkanur rukyat criteria, generally accepts government decisions as long as they align with the results of their hilal observations.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah, which consistently uses the hisab wujudul hilal method, often acts independently and determines the beginning of the month based on its own internal calculations when the Isbat Session decision is deemed inconsistent with the wujudul hilal criteria.⁵⁵ Although unification efforts through deliberation forums such as MABIMS and the socialization of the Neo MABIMS criteria continue, the

⁵²Muhammad Yunus et al., "Analysis of Determining the Beginning of the Hijri Month Using the Hisab and Rukyat Approach Methods," *Al-Mizan Journal: Journal of Islamic Law and Sharia Economics* 6468 (2025): 27.

⁵³Siti Tatmainul Qulub and Munif, "The Urgency of Fatwas and Isbat Sessions in Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month in Indonesia," p. 12-13.

⁵⁴Wiwik Indayati, "Addressing the Diversity of Rukyat Hisab Methods of Community Organizations in Indonesia," p. 133.

⁵⁵A. M. Suhar et al., "Collective Ijtihad Practice in Indonesia: The Role of Isbat Sessions in Addressing Legal Paradigm Differences Between Hisab and Rukyat," *Al-Risalah: Forum for Legal and Social Studies* 24, no. 2 (2024): 105-23 <https://doi.org/10.30631/alrisalah.v24i2.1537>.

fundamental methodological differences between hisab and rukyat remain a major challenge in achieving full uniformity.⁵⁶

The government, through the isbat (crescent moon sighting) session, acts as a mediating authority aimed at creating uniformity and legal certainty for all Indonesian Muslims. This session combines the methods of hisab (calculation) and rukyat (collective crescent moon sighting), attended by representatives of various mass organizations, including Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).⁵⁷ For NU, which adheres to rukyatul hilal bil fi'li (direct observation) with the criterion of imkanur rukyat (a minimum height of the crescent moon of 2 degrees), the isbat decision, which aligns with their rukyat results, constitutes a binding guideline and promotes the common good by preventing division.⁵⁸ This acceptance is based on the principle of obedience to the ulil amri (government) in matters that benefit the unity of the Muslim community.

On the other hand, Muhammadiyah often takes an independent position and does not always follow the decisions of the government's isbat session. This rejection stems from fundamental methodological differences; Muhammadiyah consistently uses the crescent moon sighting (hisab wujudul hilal) method, which determines the start of a new month when the crescent moon is astronomically visible (above the horizon) without requiring it to be visible to the naked eye.⁵⁹ Consequently, when Muhammadiyah's internal crescent moon sightings meet the crescent moon sighting criteria, they independently determine the start of Ramadan or Shawwal, even if a government isbat session decides otherwise based on the failure of the rukyat (seeking of the hilal).⁶⁰ This stance reflects a rejection of

⁵⁶Wiwik Indayati, "Addressing the Diversity of Hisab and Rukyat in Community Organizations in Indonesia," p. 133–134.

⁵⁷Ministry of Religious Affairs, "The Crescent Moon is the Same, Why is the Start of Ramadan Different?", <https://kemenag.go.id/opini/hilalnya-sama-kenapa-awal-ramadan-bisa-berbeda-abpggo>, accessed October 4, 2025.

⁵⁸NU Online, "A Closer Look at the Crescent Moon Criteria for NU and Muhammadiyah," <https://islam.nu.or.id/syariah/melihat-lebih-dalam-kriteria-hilal-nu-dan-muhammadiyah-ILIVz>, accessed October 4, 2025.

⁵⁹Muhammadiyah, "The Phenomenon of Different Fatwas Regarding the Start of the Hijri Month in Indonesia," <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2022/02/fenomena-perbedaan-fatwa-tentang-awal-bulan-hijriyah-di-tanah-air/>, accessed October 4, 2025.

⁶⁰BBC News Indonesia. Different Start of Fasting: Why is the Determination of the Start of Ramadan Often Different between

government authority in the field of crescent moon sighting and a defense of the organization's methodological autonomy.

The Isbat Session as a real manifestation of the principle of Tasharruf al-Imam Manūthun bi al-Maslahah

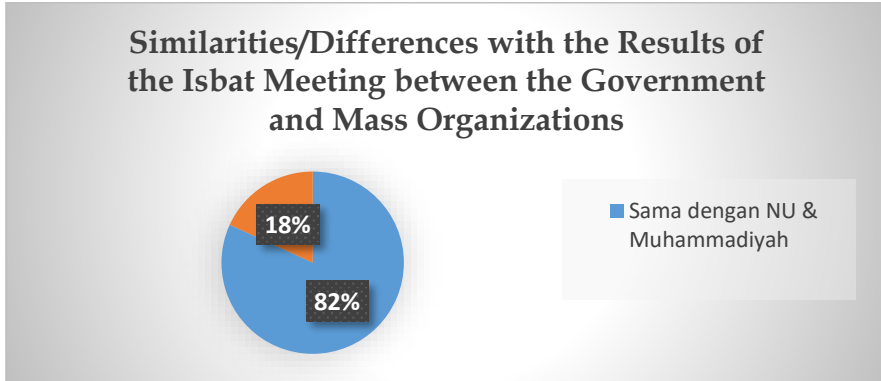


Figure 1. Similarities/Differences with the Isbat Session between the Government and Mass Organizations

The implementation of the Isbat Session in Indonesia is a real implementation of the Islamic jurisprudence principle of Tasharruf al-Imām 'alā al-Ra'iyah Manūthun bi al-Maṣlahah, where the government as a leader acts to realize public welfare by unifying the determination of the beginning of the lunar month through a combination of hisab and rukyat methods. Empirical data over a decade (2015–2025) shows that 82% of Isbat Session decisions were successfully agreed upon by the government, NU, and Muhammadiyah, while differences occurred in only 18% of cases due to fundamental methodological differences, particularly Muhammadiyah's use of the hilal sighting calculation. Despite challenges such as methodological rejection and budget criticism, the Isbat Session has proven effective in creating legal certainty, maintaining social stability, facilitating administrative and economic efficiency, and strengthening the unity of the community, thus proving itself as a valid policy instrument according to sharia and multidimensional benefits.

The differences in the results of determining the beginning of the lunar month between the government/NU and Muhammadiyah

Muhammadiyah and the Government?, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/c51wdn1q099o>, accessed on October 4, 2025.

in several cases (such as Ramadhan 2018, 2022, 2024 and Shawwal 2023) fundamentally stem from differences in the determination methodology (*manhaj*) which is principal and impacts the criteria used. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) adheres to the *rukyatul hilal bil fi'li* method (direct observation of the crescent) combined with *hisab* as a guide.⁶¹ For NU, the final decision depends on the success of the physical observation of the crescent, even if the crescent is already above the horizon according to *hisab*. They use the *imkanur rukyat* criterion (possible visibility of the crescent), where the crescent is considered likely to be visible if it meets certain thresholds (such as a minimum crescent height of 2 degrees according to the old criteria, or 3 degrees and an elongation of 6.4 degrees according to Neo-MABIMS). If the crescent is not visible, NU applies *istikmal* (completing the month to 30 days). Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah consistently uses the pure crescent sighting method. This method determines the beginning of a new month if, at sunset after *ijtimak* (conjunction), the crescent is visible (astronomically above the horizon), regardless of whether it is visible.⁶²

The visibility criterion (*imkanur rukyat*) is not taken into consideration. Thus, for Muhammadiyah, as long as the crescent is mathematically and astronomically above the horizon, the new month has begun, even if the government and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) decide to observe *istikmal* due to the lack of valid *rukyat* reports. This methodological difference is what causes divergence in critical crescent situations, namely when the crescent's position is already "visible" according to *hisab* (so Muhammadiyah begins the new month) but not yet "imkan rukyat" according to visibility (so the government and NU decide to observe *istikmal*).⁶³ Research data shows that all differences occur precisely when the height of the crescent falls within this gray zone, confirming that the root of the

⁶¹Watni Marpaung, "Hisab Imkan Ru' Yat: A Unification Effort in Determining the Beginning of the Months of the Lunar Months," *Miqot* Xxxix, No. 2 (2015): 303–18.

⁶²Zufriani, "Hisab and Rukyat and Their Influence on the Unity of the Muslim Community: Impact Analysis and Solutions," *Al-Qishthu* 14 (2016): 141–69, <https://Media.Neliti.Com/Media/Publications/559876-Hisab-Dan-Rukyat-Serta-Pengaruhnya-Terha-62894d34.Pdf>.

⁶³Maskufa Maskufa, "Hisab Wujud al-Hilal as Muhammadiyah Identity Politics in the Hisab Ruyat Discourse in Indonesia," *Jurnal Indo-Islamika* 6, no. 2 (2020): 183–202, <https://doi.org/10.15408/idi.v6i2.14802>.

problem lies not in data inaccuracy, but in the differences in the adopted determination paradigms.

In the context of Indonesia's diversity, the diverse *hisab* and *rukyyat* methodologies between NU and Muhammadiyah in determining the beginning of the lunar month actually reflect the dynamic of Islamic *ijtihad*, where differences of opinion (*ikhtilaf*) are seen as inevitable in the Islamic jurisprudence tradition.⁶⁴ However, the presence of the Isbat Session as a unifying authority actually changes the context of these methodological differences from potential conflict to an institutionalized space for negotiation. The fact that 82% of decisions were agreed upon indicates that the state has successfully carried out its role as a "referee" that prioritizes the public interest, while the remaining 18% of differences affirm the limits of state authority when faced with methodological beliefs deeply rooted in organizational identity. Thus, the Isbat Session does not merely reflect the formal application of Islamic jurisprudence principles, but rather a manifestation of "realistic fiqh" in which the state plays a strategic role in managing the diversity of religious opinions to maintain social harmony, without denying the autonomy of each group's *ijtihad*.

In comparison with previous research, this finding is supported by a number of similar studies, such as those by Siti Tatmainul Qulub (2023)⁶⁵ and Ahmad Fadholi (2019)⁶⁶, which both affirm the legitimacy of the Isbat Session through the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence and the principle of *maslahah*, and Kharun Nufus (2018)⁶⁷, which examines the legal standing of the Isbat Session decision as the authority of *ulil amri*. These studies use a normative-theoretical approach with analysis based on doctrinal studies. On the other hand,

⁶⁴Siti Muslifah, "Efforts to Address Differences in Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month in Indonesia," *Azimuth: Journal of Islamic Astronomy* 1, no. 1 (2020): 74–100, <http://jurnalfsh.uinsby.ac.id/index.php/azimuth/article/view/788>.

⁶⁵Siti Tatmainul Qulub and Ahmad Munif, "The Urgency of Fatwas and Isbat Sessions in Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Months in Indonesia," p. 423.

⁶⁶Ahmad Fadholi, "335442-Sidang-Isbat-Urgensi-Dan-Dinamikanya-Ef860368" 4, no. 2 (2019): 147–69.

⁶⁷Khaerun Nufus, "The Isbat Session for Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Months from an Islamic Law Perspective," p. 20.

studies with a similar normative-empirical approach, such as Suhar et al. (2024)⁶⁸, which views the Isbat Session as a collective ijtihad practice, also support the framework used in this study. However, this study has a clear novelty with an integrative approach that combines the analysis of Islamic jurisprudence (through the principle of *tasharruf al-imam manutun bi al-maslahah*) with comprehensive empirical data from the Isbat Session, including official documents, session minutes, and *hisab-rukyat* reports. This differs from a number of purely technical-astronomical studies, such as Mohammad Ilyas (1978)⁶⁹ who focused on the predictability of crescent visibility, Kathy Black (2018)⁷⁰ who described the Islamic calendar globally without touching on the aspect of sharia legitimacy.

Furthermore, this study also differs from studies that use a quantitative-astronomical approach, such as Irfan Anwar (2023)⁷¹ who compared the *Fazilet* and *MABIMS* Calendar criteria mathematically, and Fitriyani et al. (2024)⁷² who analyzed the technical impact of the new *MABIMS* criteria on the frequency of differences in month determination. Meanwhile, historical-organizational studies, such as Alamsyah et al. (2025)⁷³ who explored the internal dynamics of NU, did not touch on the aspect of state legitimacy as the focus of this study. Thus, this research not only fills the methodological gap by combining normative and empirical approaches, but also provides a substantive contribution in building a framework of sharia legitimacy for public policy in Indonesia, while

⁶⁸A. M. Suhar et al., "Collective Ijtihad Practice in Indonesia: The Role of Isbat Sessions in Addressing Legal Paradigm Differences Between *Hisab* and *Rukyat*," p. 105.

⁶⁹Muhammad Ilyas, "Visibility of the New Moon: Astronomical Predictability" p. 58-68.

⁷⁰Kathy Black, Hamid Mavani and Jihad Turk Bishop Kyrillos, Jonathan L. Friedmann, Tamar Frankiel, "The Islamic Calendar Book," in *Rhythms of Religious Ritual* (Claremont Press, 2021), 167-86, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvwrm4gj.8>.

⁷¹Irfan, "Comparative Study of *Fazilet* Calendar and *Mabims* Criteria on Determining Hijri Calendar," p. 99-116.

⁷²Astrie Octasari Fitriyani, Isfihani, "Implications of the New *Rukyat Mabims* Imkanur Criteria for the Unification of the Early Month of *Kamariah* in Indonesia" 7, no. 2 (2024): 462-82, <https://doi.org/10.58824/mediasas.v7i2.197>.

⁷³Afifah Mulya Alamsyah and Muhammad Ihtirozun Ni'am, "Dynamics of Determining the Beginning of the Lunar Month by *Nahdatul Ulama*: Before and After the Formulation of *Imkan Rukyat* Criteria," p. 62-78.

offering a solution-based perspective based on *maslahah* that is applicable in the Indonesian socio-religious context.

From the findings obtained, there are several steps related to how to maintain the legitimacy of the *isbat* session. First, strengthening the institutional framework of the *Isbat* Session by increasing the capacity of the *Hisab Rukyat* Agency (BHR) with the integration of real-time astronomical data and standardizing the criteria for *imkanur rukyat* that are more accommodating to developments in contemporary astronomy. Second, establishing an inclusive and sustainable methodological dialogue forum between the government, NU, Muhammadiyah, and other Islamic organizations to substantively bridge the differences in *hisab-rukyat* paradigms, including exploring the application of "tolerant criteria" for critical *hilar* cases.

Third, promoting transparency and massive socialization of the *Isbat* Session process to the public through digital channels and traditional media to increase public understanding and acceptance of government decisions. Fourth, optimizing the multidimensional benefits of the *Isbat* Session by strengthening inter-ministerial coordination in compiling the national calendar, scheduling joint leave, and planning religious logistics to maximize socio-economic efficiency. Fifth, developing an effective and accountable funding scheme for the *Isbat* Session operations by involving participatory audits to address budget criticism. Through these strategic steps, the *Isbat* Session not only maintains its *sharia* legitimacy, but also evolves into a more adaptive, inclusive instrument of governance that has a real impact on the welfare of the people.

CONCLUSION

The *Isbat* Session has strong *sharia* legitimacy through the application of the *fiqh* principle of *Tasharruf al-Imam 'ala al-Ra'iyah Manutun bi al-Maslahah*. Empirical data over a decade (2015-2025) demonstrates the effectiveness of this forum, reaching agreement in 82% of cases, while 18% of the discrepancies stem from fundamental methodological differences between the *hisab wujudul hilar* (crescent sighting) and *rukyat bil fi'li* (seeking sightings). These findings emphasize the position of the *Isbat* Session not merely as an administrative procedure, but as an implementation of contemporary Islamic jurisprudence relevant to the Indonesian context. In an

academic context, this research successfully fills a gap by integrating normative-empirical approaches, a practice rarely employed in similar studies. Unlike previous studies, which tend to focus on technical, organizational, or normative aspects separately, this research offers a holistic perspective that combines analysis of Islamic jurisprudence with empirical data. However, this study is limited in its coverage of public response data and focuses only on the determination of Ramadan and Shawwal.

Based on these findings, further research is recommended to expand the scope of the study to include all lunar months and employ a more in-depth qualitative approach through stakeholder interviews. Comparative studies with similar mechanisms in other Muslim countries and the development of a more inclusive determination criteria model are also important agenda items. Practically, strengthening the capacity of the Hisab Rukyat Agency (Badan Hisab Rukyat) and increasing the transparency of the Isbat (Isbat) meeting process are necessary to make this forum more effective in realizing the welfare of the community.

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