

## The Status Of Ramadan Fasting Observed By Hemodialysis Patients From An Islamic Perspective

Aifanisa Rahman

Imam Bonjol State Islamic University Padang

Wahyudi Rahman

Ma'had Aly Sumatera Thawalib Parabek Bukittinggi

Alamat: Jl.Prof. Mahmud Yunus Lb. Lintah, Padang City, West Sumatra 25586

Korespondensi penulis: [aifanisarahman2303@gmail.com](mailto:aifanisarahman2303@gmail.com)

**Abstract.** The month of Ramadan is a special time for Muslims to worship, erase sins, and gain the rewards and pleasure of Allah SWT. Shaum or fasting, the primary worship during this month, involves abstaining from things that invalidate the fast. However, fasting is not intended to be difficult, as stated in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah: 185, which emphasizes ease rather than hardship in fasting. Besides its spiritual aspects, fasting also has health benefits, such as helping patients with obesity and heart disease. For patients with chronic kidney disease who require hemodialysis, fasting can be particularly challenging. Hemodialysis is a life-saving method that involves cleaning the blood outside the body. In Islam, there are principles of ushul fiqh that provide rukhsah or legal concessions for those who face difficulties in fulfilling religious obligations due to certain conditions. However, if a kidney failure patient insists on fasting despite having been granted rukhsah, this is known as azimah. This study aims to explore the status of azimah for hemodialysis patients who choose to fast from an Islamic perspective. Using a qualitative approach through literature review and in-depth interviews with fiqh experts, this research seeks to understand the legal implications and medical conditions involved. The results are expected to provide clearer insights into the practice of fasting for hemodialysis patients within the context of Islamic jurisprudence.

**Keywords:** Ramadan fasting, hemodialysis, rukhsah, azimah

### INTRODUCTION

The month of Ramadan is a month of forgiveness, a time when believers engage in worship seeking the rewards and approval of Allah SWT, as well as the opportunity to erase all their past sins. During Ramadan, there is a specific act of worship known as shaum or fasting. Shaum or fasting involves abstaining from anything that invalidates the fast (As'ad, 1979).

In essence, fasting is not intended to make life difficult or to harm a Muslim individual. As stated by Allah SWT in the Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah: 185:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَيْكُم وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

***It means:** Ramadan is the (month) in which the Quran was revealed, as a guidance for mankind and clear proofs of the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). Therefore, whoever among you is present during that month, let him fast. But whoever is ill or on a journey (and does not fast) then (they should make up) an equal number of days (that were not fasted) on other days. Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship, and (He wants) for you to complete the period and to glorify Allah for that (to) which He has guided you, and perhaps you will be grateful.*

The Ramadan fast commanded by Islam not only serves as a means to draw closer to Allah SWT but also offers numerous health benefits. For instance, fasting can be beneficial for patients with obesity, heart disease, and even kidney disease (Nabila, 2023). Kidney failure is a disorder in which the kidneys fail to function properly, typically serving as filters for blood and producing urine as a result (Pane, 2020). The severity of kidney failure varies, ranging from stages 1, 2, 3, and 4 to stage 5, which is known as chronic kidney disease (CKD). Current data estimates that CKD affects about 13% of the global population and is associated with high morbidity and mortality rates (Jennifer L. Peek, 2023).

One method of treating kidney failure is hemodialysis. Hemodialysis is considered a life-saving treatment for end-stage kidney disease (Lima, 2022). This therapy involves blood purification outside the body using chemicals introduced into a dialysis machine (Mariana Murea, 2022). The fasting of patients undergoing hemodialysis during the daytime in Ramadan is a matter of scholarly debate. However, Islam, as a religion of mercy for all, uses principles of ushul fiqh (fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence) to understand the legal rulings of various issues. In ushul fiqh, there is an explanation regarding the codification of sharia law, known as rukhsah. Rukhsah is a legal concession given by sharia to those who face difficulties in fulfilling their religious obligations.

In other words, rukhsah is a legal formulation that has been modified from its original form, taking into account the specific context, situation, and location (Nastain, 2023). In this context, fasting during the daytime in Ramadan for kidney failure patients undergoing hemodialysis is granted rukhsah because these patients experience significant difficulty in maintaining the fast. However, if a Muslim who is ill chooses to continue fasting despite having the right to rukhsah, this is known as azimah. Azimah refers to the original obligation that remains in place except in cases where specific reasons or obstacles prevent a person from fulfilling it, as explained by Sheikh Abdul Hamid Hakim.

What happens if a kidney failure patient undergoing hemodialysis decides to follow *azimah* and fast? The hemodialysis treatment process can take three to five hours. In such a case, the patient would be significantly burdened if they continued to fast. Although they are entitled to *rukhsah*, if they still choose to fast, is their fast valid, or is it *makruh* (discouraged) or even *haram* (forbidden) because it endangers their life.? This question motivates the author to explore the topic in a more structured and scientific manner to understand the status of *azimah* in fasting for hemodialysis patients. This exploration aims to serve as a learning tool and enhance understanding, which the author has documented in a simple paper titled **“The Status of Ramadan Fasting Observed by Hemodialysis Patients from an Islamic Perspective.”**

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative approach with two main methods: literature review and in-depth interviews. This approach is chosen to gain a profound understanding of the status of *azimah* in hemodialysis patients from the perspectives of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence). The literature review is conducted to gather theoretical data and relevant concepts related to the research topic. It involves identifying, selecting, and analyzing literature pertaining to *fiqh*, *usul al-fiqh*, the principle of *azimah* in Islam, and the medical conditions of hemodialysis patients. In-depth interviews with scholars or experts in *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh* are selected based on their expertise and credibility. A structured interview guide is developed to understand the concept of *azimah* in the medical context, particularly in hemodialysis patients. Interviews are conducted face-to-face, with detailed notes taken, and the results are analyzed to draw conclusions that support the findings from the literature review.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Fasting

Fasting in Arabic is *صَامَ - يَصُومُ - صَوْمًا*, which means to refrain from something (Yunus, 2010). This includes refraining from sleeping, refraining from speaking, refraining from eating, and so forth. Meanwhile, according to Sharia terminology, fasting is refraining from certain activities that invalidate the fast, from the break of dawn until sunset, with intention and certain conditions (Rasjid, 2018).

The evidence for fasting is based on primary sources, namely the Noble Qur'an, the Prophetic Sunnah, and the consensus (Ijma') of scholars.

a) The basis from the Qur'anic verse is:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

It means: *"O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous."* (Quran, Al-Baqarah 2:183)

b) The basis from the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is:

بُني الإسلام على خمسٍ : شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ : عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ، وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ ، وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ ، وَالْحَجَّ ، وَصَوْمَ رَمَضَانَ

It means: *"Islam is built upon five pillars: bearing witness that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing prayer, paying zakat, performing Hajj, and fasting during Ramadan."* (Hadith reported by Bukhari)

This hadith emphasizes that the obligatory fast is only during the month of Ramadan. Although we also know that there are other obligatory fasts as well.

c) Consensus (Ijma') of the Scholars:

By consensus, the entire Muslim ummah throughout history has agreed on the obligation of fasting during Ramadan for every Muslim who meets the requirements for fasting (Sarwat, 2011). The scholars' consensus also extends to the point that anyone who denies the obligation of fasting in the month of Ramadan is considered to have left the fold of Islam. This is because fasting during Ramadan is not just an obligation, but it is also a fundamental pillar of Islam that must be upheld.

#### Fasting Law

Scholars of the Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanafi, and Hanbali schools of thought agree that fasting is divided into four types:

#### a) Obligatory Fasting

Obligatory fasting is the fast that must be observed by all believers who have reached the age of maturity, are of sound mind, and meet the conditions to perform it. One of the obligatory fasts observed by Muslims is the fast of the month of Ramadan. Fasting during the month of Ramadan is the fourth pillar of Islam and must be observed for the entire month, as Allah explains in His statement in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 183:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

It means: *"O you who have believed, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you that you may become righteous."*

The command to fast for Muslims is made obligatory by Allah SWT during the noble month of Ramadan because it is in this month that the Quran was revealed to humanity through the great Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

#### Wisdom of Fasting

The wisdom that can be derived from fasting includes:

- a) Fasting helps individuals develop a sense of fear of Allah SWT, whether they are alone or in the company of others.
- b) Fasting can reduce sexual tension and help individuals avoid various desires.
- c) Fasting trains individuals to be compassionate, encouraging those who fast to give charity and alms.
- d) During the observance of fasting, there is no distinction; everyone is equally obligated to fast.
- e) Fasting habituates the community to lead an organized life. They break their fast at the same time, and no one breaks it before the designated time.
- f) Fasting can serve as a means to eliminate substances that accumulate in the body, such as fats (Al-Maraghi, 2007).

## Rukhsah and Azimah

### a) Azimah (العزيمة)

The law of azimah is:

مَا شُرِعَ مِنَ الْأَحْكَامِ الْكُلِّيَّةِ إِبْتِدَاءً

*"Azimah refers to the original law established by Allah in the form of general rulings."*

The phrase "originally established" implies that initially, the lawgiver intended to impose a binding legal ruling (hukm taklifi) on the servants. This law is not preceded by any other law. If there had been a prior law, it would have been abrogated by the subsequent law. Thus, the law of azimah functions as the primary law and serves as an introduction to general welfare. General here means applicable to all those accountable (mukallaf) and not restricted to certain times. For instance, prayer is obligatory for all mukallaf under all conditions and situations. Similarly, the obligations of zakat, fasting, hajj, and other duties apply universally.

### b) Rukhsah (الرخصة)

The Law of Rukhsah is:

الْحُكْمُ الثَّابِتُ عَلَى خِلَافِ الدَّلِيلِ لِغَدْرِ

*"The law that applies based on a specific evidence contradicting the existing evidence due to necessity."*

Rukhsah must be based on evidence established by the lawgiver that contradicts the previously established evidence. The term 'evidence' refers to legal evidence. This includes the allowance to perform an action that is mandated by evidence demanding obligatory law, such as breaking the fast for a traveler, or contradicting the evidence demanding recommendatory law (sunna), such as abandoning congregational prayer due to rain and others.

In simple terms, azimah involves obeying commands and avoiding prohibitions universally and absolutely, whether the command is obligatory or recommended, and whether the prohibition is prohibited or discouraged. Whereas, rukhsah involves leniency and leeway granted to a responsible person in obeying commands and

avoiding prohibitions. hemodialysis Azimah is the right of Allah over His servant, while rukhsah is the right of the servant granted through the grace and wisdom of Allah. In this form, there is similarity between rukhsah and permissibility (mubah) law.

## 2. Hemodialysis

Hemodialysis is a therapy used to clean the blood outside the body. This therapy is commonly performed on individuals with kidney problems whose function has become suboptimal. Normally, the human body can clean the blood automatically, but if the kidneys are impaired, this process cannot function properly. The kidneys play a vital role in the body, responsible for filtering the blood. Additionally, the kidneys produce substances that maintain overall health. However, in individuals with chronic kidney disease or kidney failure, this function cannot operate effectively.

Chronic Kidney Failure (CRF) is one of the most common public health issues worldwide. The primary cause of CRF is kidney damage. CRF is classified into five stages based on glomerular filtration rate (GFR), with stage 5 (GFR <15 ml/min/1.73 m<sup>2</sup>) often referred to as End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD). In CRF, there is an accumulation of toxins and excess water due to impaired kidney function. Dialysis is one of the methods used to treat ESRD and remove accumulated toxins from the body. Cardiovascular risks associated with dialysis are 10 to 20 times higher in patients undergoing dialysis compared to normal individuals. Inflamed kidneys and the dialysis process also affect endothelial function, exacerbating the risk of hypertension and heart problems (Olsen, 2022). Therefore, doctors and patients must be aware of the consequences of undergoing dialysis. It is crucial to educate CRF patients about the disease, treatment options, dietary patterns, and various measures required to manage their condition and lead a normal life.

The purpose of hemodialysis therapy is to replace the kidney's function in removing metabolic wastes from the body such as urea, creatinine, and other metabolic by-products, as well as in removing excess body fluids that are normally excreted as urine by healthy kidneys. Additionally, this therapy aims to improve the quality of life for patients with decreased kidney function and serve as a temporary replacement for kidney function while awaiting other treatments.

Hemodialysis is performed with the assistance of sophisticated machines that function as a substitute for damaged kidneys in filtering the blood. These machines act as artificial kidneys capable of removing impurities, salts, and excess water from the patient's blood. In this process, medical personnel will insert needles into the patient's blood vessels to connect the body's blood flow to the blood-cleansing machine (Glickman, 2021). The dirty blood will then be filtered in the machine, and once the filtration process is completed, the clean blood will be returned to the patient's body. Hemodialysis sessions typically last around four hours and need to be performed three times a week at a dialysis clinic or hospital.

a) Benefits of Hemodialysis

Hemodialysis offers several advantages, including:

1. This procedure does not cause pain.
2. The process is carried out in a relaxed manner.
3. Hemodialysis can improve the quality of life for patients and prolong their lifespan.
4. This therapy can delay the progression of kidney disease, especially in malnourished patients, those experiencing fluid overload, decreased consciousness, seizures, inflammation of the heart lining, hyperkalemia (high blood potassium levels), and recurrent metabolic acidosis (Himmelfarb, 2020). Creatinine is a toxic substance in the blood that increases in individuals with poor kidney function.
5. Hemodialysis can be performed on patients with acute or chronic kidney failure (Gallo Marin, 2023), as well as on patients with kidney failure due to stone blockage who are awaiting surgery or kidney transplantation (Calatroni, 2023).

b) Disadvantages of Hemodialysis

Despite its various benefits, hemodialysis also has several disadvantages, such as:

1. Rapid decline in the remaining kidney function.
2. Stricter restrictions on fluid intake and diet (Bossola, 2023).



3. Lower hemoglobin levels, leading to increased erythropoietin requirements (Hussien, 2021). Some side effects of hemodialysis include low blood pressure, anemia, muscle cramps, irregular heartbeat, nausea, vomiting, headaches, infections, blood clots (thrombus), and air in the blood vessels (Thurlow, 2021).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Scholars' Opinions**

#### **a. Ulama's Views on Rukhsah and Azimah in Fasting**

##### **1. Ibn al-Jawzi**

Ibn al-Jawzi emphasizes that the permission not to fast due to illness or travel is not absolute and applies only if fasting poses a danger to the sick person. If fasting does not pose a risk to the person's health, they should not break their fast. The allowance for exemption depends on the severity of the illness caused by fasting (ash-Shawi, 2006).

##### **2. Buya Masrur Syahar**

According to the Hanafi school of thought, if a person meets the criteria for exemption but chooses not to take it, they are considered arrogant. On the other hand, the Shafi'i school of thought allows one to forego the exemption. If a doctor diagnoses that fasting would worsen the patient's condition, it is advisable for them to take the exemption. Allah does not burden His servants beyond their capabilities, and He has provided leniency to His servants for what is obligatory upon them. Therefore, it is better for them to take the granted exemption, as it is a blessing and ease provided by Allah, and why should it be refused.

##### **3. Buya Zulfahmi**

If a person is ill and meets the criteria for exemption but still wishes to observe fasting and believes they are capable of doing so, they are allowed to fast, and they will be rewarded for it. If they pass away while fasting, their death is considered martyrdom. This is because every action depends on intention. If someone has a strong intention and no doubts, then it is considered an act of worship. However, if they have doubts and still fast, it is forbidden for them to do

so. If they pass away while fasting in this state, they die in a state of sin. This is based on the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

دَعْ مَا يَرِيبُكَ إِلَى مَا لَا يَرِيبُكَ

*"Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt."*

"Different from casuistic, casuistic cannot be used as evidence. For example, the case of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) being thrown into the fire but not getting burned cannot be used as a reference. Similarly, if a sick person is diagnosed to not survive if they fast but they still fast and survive (do not die), this cannot be used as a reference because it is a matter of chance. Something that is a matter of chance cannot be used as a legal reference.

#### 4. Ustadz Taufik Suar

If fasting undertaken by a person who is sick can harm their physical health, then it is considered haram, and it is obligatory for them to break their fast. This is based on the evidence from the Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 195:

وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ ۚ وَأَحْسِنُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

*"And do not throw yourselves into destruction, and do good; indeed, Allah loves those who do good."*

But if fasting does not harm his physical health, then it is considered makruh for him to fast.

#### 5. Ustadz Ahmad Yunus

If a doctor's diagnosis states that fasting for the patient could jeopardize his life, then it is not permissible for him to continue fasting, as it would cause harm. Muslims have obligations that must be fulfilled, and the foremost obligation is to safeguard oneself. Just as when a Muslim's life is threatened, such as when he is about to be shot by Jews unless he apostatizes, then he may declare apostasy because his obligation is to safeguard himself, and it does not matter if he still believes in Allah in his heart. This can be related to fasting, which is the principle of choosing between two obligations. Between the obligation to fast in the month

of Ramadan and the obligation to safeguard oneself. It is better for him to choose the obligation to safeguard oneself, as a sick person who meets the requirements for obtaining a concession is better off taking that concession. Because it is a form of leniency from Allah SWT so that he can preserve and safeguard himself.

#### **b. Scholars' Views on Fasting While Undergoing Hemodialysis**

##### **1. Sheikh Ibn Uthaymeen**

Sheikh Ibn Uthaymeen was asked about the ruling on undergoing dialysis while fasting. He responded, "I am concerned that the dialysis process may involve the infusion of some mineral nutrients, thereby replacing eating and drinking. If that is the case, then it would invalidate the fast. Therefore, if someone is afflicted with this disease throughout their life, then they are considered sick, with no hope of recovery, and they may pay fidyah. However, if the mixture infused into the patient's blood during the dialysis process is not a nutrient for the body, and only serves to clean and wash the blood, then this does not invalidate their fast. Therefore, a person may undergo this medical procedure while fasting. Such issues should be consulted with a doctor."

##### **2. Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Ifta'**

The Permanent Committee concluded, based on the explanation provided by medical experts regarding the process of hemodialysis in sick patients, that this process involves the extraction of blood from the patient, which is then circulated through a machine for special treatment before being returned to the patient's body. During this process, some chemical substances and minerals, such as glucose and body ions, are added to the blood. After conducting an in-depth study of the mechanism of hemodialysis by various medical experts, the Permanent Committee ruled that undergoing hemodialysis while fasting invalidates the fast.

#### **Author's Analysis**

After discussing fasting and hemodialysis in the previous chapter, the author argues that patients undergoing hemodialysis may fast during Ramadan if they feel capable and not burdened by it. However, when the patient undergoes the dialysis process, they are obligated to break their fast. The author's reasoning for this opinion stems from various scholars' views, indicating that a sick person may fast if they feel capable and not

burdened by it. However, if fasting poses harm, then it is prohibited for them to fast as it would amount to harming oneself.

Essentially, Allah SWT does not intend to impose hardship on His servants in performing acts of worship, as stated in the Quran:

وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ ۚ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ

It means: *"And strive for Allah with the striving due to Him. He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty."* (Al-Hajj:78)

In Islamic teachings, there are five main objectives of Islamic law that must be safeguarded by Muslims. The most important of these is *hifzuddin* (religion), followed by *hifzunnafs* (self-preservation). However, in its application, self-preservation must take precedence, because how can one safeguard religion when oneself is not preserved? That's why for the sick, it's better to focus on their own health first before upholding the religious obligations.

Moving on to the dialysis process, hemodialysis patients are provided with essential nutrients such as amino acids, sodium, sugar, and other nutrients. These nutrients are added to the blood that has been purified by the dialysis machine because the kidneys cannot produce these nutrients. Simply put, the dialysis process is necessary because the kidneys are no longer functioning properly, necessitating the use of artificial kidneys to perform the kidney's functions, one of which is providing nutrients to the blood. For this reason, fasting for a hemodialysis patient becomes invalidated during the dialysis process.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussions outlined in the preceding chapters, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Fasting during Ramadan for hemodialysis patients remains obligatory. Hemodialysis patients may observe fasting during Ramadan when they are not undergoing the dialysis process, provided that they are physically capable of fasting and it does not harm them.
2. The hemodialysis process nullifies fasting due to the mixing of chemicals involved in the hemodialysis process. Hemodialysis patients undergoing the process are

prohibited from fasting, but they are still obligated to make up for the missed fasts on other days when they are capable of fasting. If they are unable to do so, they should compensate by paying fidyah.

#### Recommendations:

1. Muslims are advised to avoid actions that may lead to harm or detriment.
2. The author welcomes constructive criticism and suggestions for the improvement of this scholarly work from various stakeholders, esteemed readers and the Muslim community in general. The author appreciates and accepts constructive criticism and suggestions to enhance the scholarly quality of this work, making it more accountable and disseminable within the Muslim community.

With the completion of these recommendations, the author's task in discussing this paper comes to an end. May Allah SWT continually guide us all. Hopefully, this paper will prove beneficial to all of us, especially to the author himself.

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