



Mobilization of Violence Under the Guise of Religion Against the Ahmadiyah Minority in Indonesia: A Lesson from the Past

In the past (2004-2014), the Ahmadiyah minority in Indonesia all too often faced attacks and violence from Muslim groups claiming to act in the name of religion. During this period, there was a mobilization of violence against the Ahmadiyah community, referring to efforts to rally Muslims to carry out violent actions. This term encompasses various contexts, ranging from mass mobilization in social conflicts to more organized movements aimed at spreading violence. These Muslim groups committed brutal acts of intolerance and violated the human rights of the Ahmadiyah community, who were persecuted for their choice of belief based on personal conscience. The government of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–2014) failed to protect the Ahmadiyah congregation as a minority group in Indonesia and to uphold the constitutional guarantees enshrined in the 1945 Constitution and the state foundation of Pancasila, which guarantee freedom of religion and worship for the community. all citizens. Violence against the Ahmadiyah minority reflects a deep-rooted pattern of violence in Indonesia that has persisted and expanded in society since the collapse of Suharto's New Order authoritarian regime in 1998. Learning from the mistakes of the past, it is clear that religious pluralism and diversity remain unresolved and serious challenges in Indonesia, a nation founded on the noble ideology of Pancasila, which promotes tolerance.

Keywords: Ahmadiyah, minority, religious violence, Islam, Indonesia.

Di masa lalu (2004-2014), minoritas Ahmadiyah di Indonesia terlalu sering menghadapi serangan dan kekerasan dari kelompok Muslim yang mengatasnamakan agama. Dalam periode ini terjadi mobilisasi kekerasan terhadap jemaat Ahmadiyah yang merujuk pada upaya menggerakkan atau mengumpulkan umat Islam untuk melakukan tindakan kekerasan. Istilah ini dapat mencakup berbagai konteks, mulai dari mobilisasi massa dalam konflik sosial hingga gerakan yang lebih terorganisasi yang bertujuan menyebarkan kekerasan. Kelompok Muslim ini melakukan tindakan intoleransi yang brutal dan melanggar hak asasi manusia jemaat Ahmadiyah, yang mengalami persekusi karena pilihan keyakinannya berdasarkan hati nuraninya. Pemerintah Presiden Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004-2014) gagal melindungi Jemaat Ahmadiyah sebagai kelompok minoritas di Indonesia dan menegakkan jaminan konstitusional UUD 1945 dan dasar negara Pancasila yang menjamin kebebasan beragama dan beribadah bagi seluruh warga negara. Kekerasan terhadap minoritas Ahmadiyah merupakan salah satu bentuk kekerasan yang sudah mengakar di Indonesia yang terus berlanjut dan menjamur di tengah masyarakat sejak tumbang rezim otoriter Orde Baru Soeharto pada tahun 1998. Belajar dari kesalahan masa lalu, terlihat jelas bahwa pluralisme dan keberagaman agama masih menjadi masalah yang belum terselesaikan dan merupakan masalah serius di Indonesia yang menganut ideologi Pancasila, ideologi luhur toleransi.

Kata kunci: Ahmadiyah, minoritas, kekerasan agama, Islam, Indonesia.

Authors:

Herdi Sahrasad¹
Dedy Tabrani²
Iskandar Zulkarnain³
Ti Aisyah⁴
Mai Dar⁵

Affiliation:

¹ Universitas Paramadina, Indonesia
² Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kepolisian (STIK-PTIK), Indonesia
^{3,4} Universitas Malikussaleh, Indonesia
⁵ Philipps-Universität Marburg, Germany

Corresponding author:

herdi.nurwanto@paramadina.ac.id

Dates:

Received 29 Jun 2025
Revised 13 Feb 2026
Accepted 6 Mar 2026
Published 8 Mar 2026

How to cite this article:

Sahrasad, Herdi, Dedy Tabrani, Iskandar Zulkarnain, Ti Aisyah, and Mai Dar. "Mobilization of Violence Under the Guise of Religion Against the Ahmadiyah Minority in Indonesia: A Lesson from the Past". *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 27 (1).
<https://doi.org/10.14421/esensia.v27i1.6607>

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Introduction

Indonesia has made steady progress in recent years toward strengthening democracy and safeguarding human rights. The international community has responded positively, praising Indonesia as a model of democracy in the Muslim world. It is also recognized for its diversity, religious tolerance, and as a safe haven for moderate Muslims.¹ During his visit to Jakarta in November 2011, U.S. President Barack Obama commended "... the spirit of religious tolerance that is enshrined in Indonesia's Constitution, and that remains one of this country's defining and inspiring characteristics," during his visit to Jakarta in November 2010.² After more than 30 years in power, President Suharto resigned in May 1998, ushering in a period of greater freedom in Indonesia. The long-suppressed opinions of civil society also began to spread. However, intra-religious conflict increased, and the government failed to take a firm stance against lawlessness, intimidation, and violence as expressions of intolerance. This exacerbated the conditions, making the situation more susceptible to assaults. Setara Institute in Jakarta reported 216 attacks on religious minorities in 2010, 244 in 2011, and 264 in 2012.³ Another Jakarta-based organization, The Wahid Institute, documented an increase from the previous year, recording 64 violations of religious freedom and 134 incidents of religious intolerance.⁴

Intra-religious conflict refers to violence or hostility between different groups or factions within the same religion. Such conflicts can be

driven by theological, political, social, or economic factors and often have significant consequences for the stability and security of the affected regions. Examples of intra-religious conflict include the Sunni-Shia divide in Islam, the Catholic-Protestant divide in Christianity, and the Orthodox-Reform divide in Judaism. The meaning and definition of intra-religious conflict can vary depending on the context and the perspectives of the actors involved. For instance, some may view intra-religious conflict as a manifestation of religious diversity and pluralism, while others may see it as a threat to religious unity and identity. Some regard intra-religious conflict as a source of violence and extremism, whereas others consider it an opportunity for dialogue and reconciliation. Additionally, some attribute intra-religious conflict to external factors, such as state intervention or foreign influence, while others blame internal factors, such as doctrinal disputes or leadership struggles.

The context of intra-religious conflict can also change over time and across regions, depending on the historical, cultural, and geopolitical circumstances of the religious groups involved. For example, intra-religious conflict in the Middle East and North Africa has been influenced by the colonial legacy, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Iranian Revolution, the Arab Spring, and the rise of Islamist movements.⁵ Intra-religious conflict in sectarian societies such as Iraq, Lebanon, Nigeria, and Pakistan has been shaped by the interaction between religious outbidding, state repression, and civil war.⁶

¹ Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 214–221.

² "Remarks by the President at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta, Indonesia," *The White House Office of the Press Secretary*, last modified 2010, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/10/remarks-president-university-indonesia-jakarta-indonesia>.

³ Setara Institute, *Indeks Kinerja Penegakan HAM 2012*, 2012, <https://setara-institute.org/index-kinerja-penegakan-ham-2012/>.

⁴ The Wahid Institute, *Year End Report of Religious Freedom in Indonesia*, 2016.

⁵ Isak Svensson, "One God, Many Wars: Religious Dimensions of Armed Conflict in the Middle East and North Africa," *Civil Wars* 15, no. 4 (Desember 2013): 411–430.

⁶ Brittnee Carter dan Cora Caton, "Primed for Violence: Intrareligious Conflict and the State in Sectarian Societies," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 48, no. 1 (Januari 2, 2025): 1–20.





Intra-religious conflict within the Muslim Ummah in Tamale, Ghana, has been driven by competition between Sufi orders and Salafi groups over religious authority and resources.⁷ Similarly, intra-religious conflict in intrastate wars, such as those in Bosnia, Sri Lanka, and Sudan, has been influenced by the roles of religious actors as either spoilers or peacemakers.⁸ Additionally, intra-religious conflict among Islamist organizations, such as al-Qaida and the Islamic State, has been shaped by contestation over religious legitimacy and leadership.⁹ Intra-religious conflict is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that demands a nuanced and contextualized understanding. It is neither a monolithic nor a static category; instead, it is diverse and evolving. Such conflict is not purely religious or secular but rather multifaceted and hybrid. Moreover, it is not a predetermined or inevitable outcome but a contingent and variable one.¹⁰

According to the Central Board of the Indonesian Ahmadiyya Congregation in Parung, Bogor, West Java, there were 250 Ahmadiyya branches in Indonesia in 2000, with 600,000 members. Most of these branches were located in West Java. In contrast, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Lahore has barely 2000 members spread across 19 locations. The majority of these locations are in East Java and Central Java. This report examines the specific situation of Muslim mobilization and violence against the Ahmadiyya community in Indonesia between 2004 and 2014. It also explains how the state supports bigoted communities that believe they hold the highest moral authority. The Cikeusik

incident was a tragic loss of life that sparked protests among minority groups in Indonesia. In this context, mobilization refers to any action that encourages the participation of individuals or groups in public affairs.

This paper examines the specific circumstances surrounding Muslim mobilization and violence against the Ahmadiyya community in Indonesia between 2004 and 2014. The Ahmadiyya case presents significant academic challenges related to the intersection of theological interpretation, human rights protection, social order, and conflict management. During this period, the Ahmadiyya community experienced various forms of violence, marginalization, and stigmatization as a deviant group, leading to persecution, discrimination, and expulsion in several regions of Indonesia. The paper also highlights how certain state responses indirectly enabled fanatical groups claiming moral authority to justify acts of violence against the Ahmadiyya community.

Drawing on Oberschall's theory, mobilization is understood as the process of pooling resources, including individual participation within organizations, to pursue shared objectives, protect collective interests, and challenge dominant power structures.¹¹ This paper also adopts Jackman's definition of violence as any action that causes harm to another person. Such violence may take verbal, written, or physical forms and can result in a wide range of consequences, including economic and social disadvantages, emotional distress, and physical injury.¹² Within this framework, the

⁷ Ibrahim Alidu Ayuba, "Intra-religious Conflicts among Muslim Ummah (Community) in Tamale from the 1960s to 2011" (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), 2011).

⁸ Alexander De Juan, "The Role of Intra-Religious Conflicts in Intrastate Wars," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 4 (Agustus 8, 2015): 762–780.

⁹ Nukhet A. Sandal, "Framing Religious Outbidding: Al-Qaida, Islamic State, and Intra-religious Competition," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 22, no. 3–4 (Oktober 2, 2021): 461–480.

¹⁰ Aqib Suminto et al., *Refleksi Pembaharuan Pemikiran Islam: 70 Tahun Harun Nasution* (Jakarta: LSAF, 1989).

¹¹ Anthony Oberschall, "Theories of Social Conflict," *Annual review of Sociology* 4 (1987): 291–315.

¹² Mary R. Jackman, "License to Kill: Violence and Legitimacy in Expropriative Social Relations," in *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations*, ed. John T. Jost dan Brenda Major (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 437–467.





anti-Ahmadiyya violence in Cikeusik, Pandeglang, can be understood as a form of collective violence involving organized participation by groups acting in the name of religious legitimacy. Methodologically, this paper employs a qualitative approach based on the analysis of secondary sources, including online news reports, interviews, documents, official reports, and other forms of media coverage. The analytical framework combines perspectives from human rights, constitutionalism, and the genealogy of violence to examine both the causes and consequences of the attacks, as well as the role and responsibility of the government under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–2014) in protecting the Ahmadiyya community as a religious minority.

This paper argues that violence against the Ahmadiyya minority constitutes a violation of human rights, constitutional guarantees, and human dignity, as members of this community have been persecuted for their religious beliefs and freedom of conscience. It further suggests that such violence reflects a deeper historical pattern of violence in Indonesia that has persisted since the collapse of Suharto's authoritarian New Order regime. In examining this issue, the paper highlights the continuing challenges of religious pluralism and diversity in Indonesia and considers the responsibility of the state to uphold constitutional protections and ensure the safety of all citizens from acts of religious violence.

The Controversy and Debates Surrounding the Ahmadiyya Movement

In recent years, the Ahmadiyya Indonesian Community (Jamaah Ahmadiyah Indonesia, JAI) has emerged as one of the most divisive Islamic groups in Indonesia, sparking intense debate among the country's intellectuals, religious leaders, political figures, and academics. This

controversy stems from the fact that the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has banned the Ahmadiyya community due to its teachings, which are considered to contradict Islamic law. According to the MUI, the issue with JAI is religious in nature because it concerns the "right of God." However, Article 29 of Indonesia's 1945 Constitution explicitly guarantees all citizens the right to freely practice their religion. Therefore, the state is obligated to protect the safety and rights of all faiths. Instead of safeguarding and respecting Ahmadiyya teachings, the MUI has issued fatwas declaring them heretical. The writers examined the literature on violence against the Ahmadiyah community in Indonesia, a religious minority group that has faced persecution and discrimination for decades. This analysis focuses on how the authors challenge the status quo and confront the reality of the situation, as well as the implications for human rights and religious freedom in Indonesia.

One of the main sources we will use is Burhani's work, which provides a comprehensive overview of the history, doctrine, and social position of the Ahmadiyah community in Indonesia, as well as the sources and manifestations of hatred and violence against them. Burhani argues that anti-Ahmadiyya sentiment is driven not only by theological differences but also by political, economic, and social factors. He also criticizes the state's role in legitimizing and facilitating the persecution of the Ahmadiyah and calls for a more pluralistic and tolerant approach to religious diversity in Indonesia.¹³ The state has failed to protect its citizens from violence perpetrated by intolerant groups. Even more concerning, it has contributed to fostering an environment conducive to such violence by issuing decrees that stigmatize the Ahmadiyah community as a deviant sect. Furthermore, the state has neglected to uphold the principle of

¹³ Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Hating the Ahmadiyya: The Place of 'Heretics' in Contemporary Indonesian Muslim society," *Contemporary Islam* 8, no. 2 (Mei 4, 2014): 133–152.





religious freedom enshrined in the constitution and international human rights conventions.¹⁴

Another source we will use is Budiwanti's study, which examines the case of Ahmadiyah in West Nusa Tenggara, a province that has experienced severe violence and displacement since 2006. She analyzes the factors that led to the escalation of conflict, including the rise of radical Islamism, the weakness of the local government, and the lack of social cohesion. Additionally, she explores the impact of violence on the lives and identities of Ahmadiyah members, as well as their strategies for resistance and survival. Budiwanti argues that the persecution of Ahmadiyah reflects a deeper crisis of pluralism and democracy in Indonesia.¹⁵ The case of Ahmadiyah illustrates how pluralism in Indonesia has deteriorated under the pressure of radical groups that claim to represent the majority and use violence to impose their views on others. It also highlights how democracy in Indonesia has failed to protect the rights and dignity of minorities, who are marginalized and excluded from public spaces.¹⁶

A third source we will use is Suprianto et al. They investigate the situation of the Ahmadiyah community in West Kalimantan, a province where they have faced discrimination and violence since 2012. The authors document various forms and causes of discrimination, including harassment, intimidation, vandalism, expulsion, and denial of access to public services. They also analyze the legal and policy frameworks regulating religious freedom in Indonesia, identifying gaps and challenges in their implementation. Finally, they propose

recommendations to improve the protection and promotion of religious freedom for the Ahmadiyah and other minority groups in Indonesia.¹⁷ Discrimination against the Ahmadiyah community violates their fundamental right to religious freedom, as guaranteed by the Indonesian constitution and international human rights law. Such discrimination also undermines social harmony and national unity, which are founded on the principles of diversity and tolerance. Therefore, it is imperative that the government implement effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination against the Ahmadiyah and ensure they can practice their faith without fear or interference.¹⁸

This literature review demonstrates how various authors challenge the status quo and confront the reality of violence against the Ahmadiyah community in Indonesia. They offer valuable insights into the historical, doctrinal, political, economic, social, legal, and human rights dimensions of the issue. Additionally, they emphasize the need for further research, advocacy, and action to address the problem and to promote pluralism and democracy in Indonesia.

On the other hand, critics of the fatwa viewed it as a human rights issue, particularly in the context of religion, and therefore a sociopolitical matter. According to M. Dawam Raharjo, a Muslim intellectual, these divergent perspectives can be traced back to religious patterns characterized either by confrontation or interiority, borrowing the terminology of sociologist Peter L. Berger.¹⁹ It is understandable

¹⁴ Burhani, "Hating the Ahmadiyya: The Place of 'Heretics' in Contemporary Indonesian Muslim society," 147.

¹⁵ Erni Budiwanti, "Pluralism Collapses: A Study of the Jama'ah Ahmadiyah Indonesia and its Persecution," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2009).

¹⁶ Budiwanti, "Pluralism Collapses: A Study of the Jama'ah Ahmadiyah Indonesia and its Persecution," 18.

¹⁷ Bibi Suprianto et al., "Discrimination of Religious Freedom: The Case of Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Minority Group in West Kalimantan," *Al-*

Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam 23, no. 1 (Mei 28, 2023): 209–235.

¹⁸ Suprianto et al., "Discrimination of Religious Freedom: The Case of Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Minority Group in West Kalimantan," 232.

¹⁹ Peter L. Berger dan Thomas Luckmann, *Tafsir Sosial Atas Kenyataan: Risalah tentang Sosiologi Pengetahuan*, trans. Hasan Basari (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1990); Peter L. Berger, *Langit Suci Agama sebagai Realitas Sosial*, trans. Hartono (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1991).





that dishonest and emotionally unstable individuals infiltrated JAI communities in the Cibeber and Cempaka Districts of Cianjur, West Java, during the previous incident due to the confrontational environment. Researchers found that the February 6, 2011, attack on Ahmadis in the village of Cikeusik, Pandeglang, Banten, was a setback for democracy, the principle of pluralism, and the ideals of our nation during President SBY's administration. Tragically, this was not the first time Ahmadis had been violently attacked.

Timur Pradopo, head of Indonesia's national police (Kapolri), stated that this outbreak of violence was unexpected. Given the public's desire for predictability, it is unsurprising that President SBY responded to the tragedy by merely expressing concern and making no specific commitments to prevent further acts of violence against any group, anywhere. It is not an exaggeration to say that during the SBY era, the political elite never succeeded in presenting a unified stance on how to address the Ahmadiyya community within the framework of the nation-state's pluralist ideals. Furthermore, some political elites seem to forget that Ahmadiyya adherents have lived in the archipelago for decades, which suggests they are blaming the victims. It is both tragic and distressing that the state and society have failed to protect the Ahmadis.²⁰

Some experts argue that Ahmadiyya qualifies as a failed state because the government has been unable to prevent violence by non-state actors within its borders. In this context, the SBY government adopts the Weberian ideology, which views the state as a monolithic and ideal entity that controls and concentrates all legitimate use of force within its territory. However, the country during the SBY era

appears to represent the state as a social structure composed of many unstable and evolving components, each attempting to establish dominance, exert control, and implement changes regarding the Ahmadiyya situation, as argued by Migdal.²¹ As a developing country transitioning toward democracy, Indonesia does not represent Weber's ideal type of state.²² The Ahmadiyya case demonstrates that the Indonesian people cannot place complete trust in their government to ensure their safety; instead, they must rely on the social strength of their fellow citizens. Attacks on minorities may stem from localized, communal, and discriminatory social and political processes and structures, as Taslima Nasrin observed in Bangladesh. A similar trend has been evident during the SBY era in Indonesia.

The Tragedy of Cikeusik

On the evening of Saturday, February 6th, 2011, dozens of Ahmadiyya members from the nearby city of Bogor traveled to Cikeusik. Meanwhile, thousands of people from neighboring areas such as Cibaliung, Cikeusik, and Malingping mobilized and converged on the Ahmadiyya congregation's meeting location early Sunday morning to demand the group's dissolution. Physical clashes were inevitable following the attack by the Muslim mob. Three people were killed, and two vehicles, a motorcycle, and a home were destroyed.²³

It is now known that attacks against the Ahmadiyya community in West Indonesia began around 10:00 p.m. A house was blown up, and a car was torched and thrown into a ravine. This outbreak of violence, fueled by religious intolerance, is tragically exemplified by the Cikeusik incident. Approximately 1,500 Islamist militants attacked the Ahmadiyya community in Cikeusik with stones, bamboo, and machetes in a

²⁰ Philips Vermonte, "Kekerasan Terhadap Ahmadiyya: Gagalnya Negara dan Masyarakat" (Jakarta: Presented at CSIS, 2011).

²¹ Joel Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²² Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology* (Vol. 1) (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968).

²³ "Dua Mobil dan Satu Rumah Dirusak Warga," *Kompas*, Februari 6, 2011.





horrific act of religious violence. The assailants shouted "Infidel! Infidel!" The footage shows that local police were present but left as soon as the crowd began attacking the Ahmadiyya residence.²⁴ Three Ahmadiyya worshippers were killed as a result of the incident.²⁵ "They gripped my hand and loosened my belt with a machete" Ahmad Masihudin, a 25-year-old Ahmadi student, said. "They forced me to remove both my outerwear and underwear. I was left wearing only my pants. My Blackberry and Rp. 2.5 million were stolen. They exposed my genitalia as they stripped me down to my underwear. I curled up in the fetal position and tried to nap. I attempted to shield my face, but I was stabbed in the left eye nonetheless. Suddenly, I heard someone shout, 'It's dead, it's dead!'"²⁶

The Cikeusik attack was a tragic example of the alarming rise in intolerance and violence that has plagued Indonesia since the 1998 reform era. The Ahmadiyya community in Cikeusik was a primary target of intolerant groups; however, they are not the only religious minority under attack. Shiites, Christians, and others have also faced violence. Sunni extremist groups, referred to as Islamists in this study, are the primary perpetrators of intimidation and violence, often with tacit or overt cooperation from government officials and police. Several organizations, including the Islamic Community Forum (FUI), the Indonesian Muslim Communication Forum (Forkami), the Islamic Defenders Front (IDF or FPI), Hizbut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), and the Reformist Islamic Movement (Garis), have either been directly involved in or have provided support for attacks on minority groups.²⁷ These

groups adhere to the orthodox Sunni view that all non-Muslims are "infidels" (with the exception of Christians and Jews), and they label Muslims who disagree as "religious blasphemers." As far as we can tell, the conditions in Indonesia are ripe for the formation of religious forces that are cloaked in violence.²⁸ According to numerous hypotheses, religious affiliation is not immune to the seeds that can grow into violence. Lochhead even claimed that religious skepticism is an essential component of developing one's own spiritual identity.²⁹

Polemic Following Mobilization

Public debate and polemics in the public sphere erupted following the violent mobilization against the Ahmadiyya community. The issue of Ahmadiyya has heightened public awareness about the need for the government or state not to ban these controversial teachings. What should be done?

The controversy has incited horizontal violence and resulted in casualties among Ahmadiyya worshippers. Slamet Effendi Yusuf, Chairman of the Religious Interfaith Harmony Division of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), emphasized that Ahmadiyya is a heretical and misleading sect. In addition to the MUI, other Islamic organizations have also declared the teachings of Ahmadiyya to be outside the bounds of Islam. For example, Muhammadiyah has considered Ahmadiyya heretical since 1926, and the MUI issued a similar ruling in 1980 under the leadership of Buya Hamka. This stance was reaffirmed in 2005, with both the MUI and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) declaring Ahmadiyya heretical. However, the MUI's fatwa explicitly

²⁴ "Seribuan Warga Cikeusik Serang Jemaah Ahmadiyah," *Kompas* (Pandeglang, Februari 6, 2011), <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2011/02/06/13041680/seribuan-warga-cikeusik-serang-jemaah-ahmadiyah>.

²⁵ "Ahmadiyah: Tiga Jemaah Kami Tewas," *Kompas*, 2011, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2011/02/06/17531418/ahmadiyah-tiga-jemaah-kami-tewas>.

²⁶ Interview, Ahmad Masihudin in Cikeusik Banten, early March 2012.

²⁷ Mark Woodward et al., "The Islamic Defenders Front: Demonization, Violence and the State in Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam* 8, no. 2 (Mei 28, 2014): 167–168.

²⁸ Cahyo Pamungkas, "Social Resilience of Minority Group: Study on Syiah Refugees in Sidoarjo and Ahmadiyah Refugees in Mataram," *Ulumuna* 19, no. 2 (Desember 7, 2015): 251–278, <http://ulumuna.or.id/index.php/ujs/article/view/214>.

²⁹ David Lochhead, *The Dialogical Imperative: A Christian Reflection on Interfaith Encounter* (New York: Orbis Books January, 1989).





condemns anarchic actions that violate the law and urges Muslims to reject violence. The MUI has also encouraged its regional representatives to engage with members of heretical sects, inviting them to return to the correct path according to Islamic teachings.

"As a religion that signifies peace and represents the majority, Islam expects Muslims to be protectors of minority groups," said K.H. Salahudin Wahid, also known as Gus Solah, Caretaker of Pesantren Tebuireng Jombang Islamic Boarding School.³⁰ Gus Solah advised Islamic organizations to file a lawsuit in court to clarify the legal status of the Ahmadiyya community—whether it is prohibited or not. He expressed regret that, until now, the position of Ahmadiyya remains unclear, specifically regarding whether the institution tarnishes Islam. According to him, this issue must be resolved through legal means. Islamic organizations should initiate a lawsuit in court. "Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah, NU, or MUI, and even the Minister of Religion, have the right to file a lawsuit. Once a legal decision is made, everything will be clear, similar to the cases involving Lia Eden and Ahmad Musadek, Gus Solah when interviewed at the Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School.³¹

The confusion surrounding the Ahmadiyya position risks repeating conflict and violence against the Ahmadiyya community, potentially resulting in an increasing number of victims. This underscores the importance of coming together to ensure that the Ahmadiyya issue is resolved correctly, fairly, and thoroughly by the authorities. Furthermore, the violence that occurred in Cikeusik, which resulted in the deaths of three Ahmadi, must be thoroughly investigated as it constitutes a violation of

human rights. If necessary, the perpetrators should be severely punished.

Prior to the 2009 election, the Islamic Community Forum (FUI) called for the dissolution of the Ahmadiyya community. The dilemma faced by President SBY during this period of declining popularity was significant. On April 1, 2009, hundreds of Muslims who had joined the FUI threatened to adopt a more confrontational stance if SBY did not comply with their demand to disband the Ahmadiyya. The issue of abstentions further complicated the situation.

"We don't trust SBY because he doesn't want to disband Ahmadiyya. If SBY does not dissolve Ahmadiyya, we will boycott the election and abstain from voting. However, if SBY disbands Ahmadiyya, that would be a different issue," said Choirul RS, Chairperson of the FPI Tanfidz Surakarta Council, in his speech before hundreds of demonstrators.³² The masses who listened to the speech immediately chanted "Allahu Akbar!" repeatedly. For the umpteenth time, the FUI took to the streets demanding the dissolution of the Ahmadiyya community. They view Ahmadiyya as contradictory to the teachings of Islam. The crowd then carried out a long march, the State Palace.

Responding to the discourse on the prohibition of Ahmadiyya, Muslim scholar Djohan Effendi, in a conversation with the writers in early April 2009 in Jakarta, stated that several questions needed to be considered.³³ He emphasized that contemplation, especially by government officials, was essential. First, if the ban is based on a fatwa issued by a religious institution, what is the role of that institution within the state structure of the Republic of Indonesia? Second, is the institution part of the state structure, or does it stand above it? Are the

³⁰ "Inilah Solusi Masalah Ahmadiyya Ala Gus Solah.," *Inilah.com*, last modified 2014, <https://www.inilah.com/inilah-solusi-masalah-ahmadiyah-ala-gus-sholah>.

³¹ "Rawan Konflik, Tuntaskan Masalah Ahmadiyya!," *Inilah.com*, last modified 2013,

<http://m.inilah.com/news/detail/1221752/rawan-konflik-tuntaskan-masalah-Ahmadiyya>.

³² "Rawan Konflik, Tuntaskan Masalah Ahmadiyya!"

³³ Djohan Effendi in conversation with the Authors (early April 2009) in Jakarta.





fatwas issued by this institution binding, and must they therefore be obeyed and implemented by the state? Ahmadiyya Indonesia has been present in the archipelago since the colonial era. The first Ahmadiyya missionary arrived in Indonesia in the 1920s. This arrival was preceded by several young Indonesians traveling to Qadian, India, to study Islam. It was these individuals who invited the Ahmadiyya missionaries to come to Indonesia.

Since his arrival, there has been a reaction from Islamic scholars. A debate and polemic ensued, taking place in Minangkabau and Jakarta, supported by well-reasoned arguments. There were no calls for prohibition, nor any reports of destruction. Both sides respected each other's positions. The Ahmadiyya issue resurfaced in 1980 when the Rābiṭah Ālam al-Islām declared that Ahmadis were non-Muslims and urged Islamic countries to take action against them. Consequently, the government of Saudi Arabia, for example, does not permit Ahmadiyya followers to enter the sacred land of *Ḥarām* to perform Hajj or Umrah. Similarly, the legislative bodies of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have amended the constitution to classify Ahmadis as a non-Muslim minority. However, the Pakistani government does not ban Ahmadiyya organizations. In fact, according to the constitution, Ahmadis are allocated seats in the Pakistani parliament as a minority group.

The problem that arises in Indonesia is not the heretical fatwa itself. Such fatwas are not new; they have existed since the early presence of the Ahmadiyya community in the country. Accusations of heresy are problems that have appeared in many religions since their earliest periods. Different religious interpretations often claim to represent the true faith, while others are considered incorrect or even misguided. Ask religious teachers and scholars who actively promote what they call the *salaf* understanding: are interpretations other than theirs considered valid or heretical? "Surely the answer would be that the salafi understanding they profess is the

true one, while others deviate from the correct teachings," Djohan said.

Muhammadiyah itself would not have emerged if its founders had regarded the religious understanding and practices of the Nahdliyin as entirely correct. The movement arose because many practices among Nahdliyin were considered *bid'ah*. Consequently, Muhammadiyah promoted and practiced forms of religious observance that differed from what they believed to be incorrect traditions. A similar situation can be observed in the case of the Ahmadis. However, this issue has now entered the realm of politics and has become a dilemma for President SBY. If SBY were to dissolve Ahmadiyya, he could be accused of violating the constitution. Yet if he refrained from doing so, there were concerns that hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of Muslims might abstain from participating in the 2009 elections.

Pluralist Muslim scholars suggested that SBY should respond to the demands to dissolve Ahmadiyya calmly and cautiously. The same concern was also directed to Vice President Jusuf Kalla (JK). "Disbanding Ahmadiyya would expose SBY or JK to accusations of violating the constitution," said M. Syafii Anwar, Director of the International Center for Islam and Pluralism.

In this context, the significant issue is that, in the name of Islam, certain Muslim groups urged President SBY to dissolve Ahmadiyya. Such pressure could potentially place SBY in a position that risks violating the constitution. The proposed issuance of a Joint Ministerial Decree (*Surat Keputusan Bersama*, SKB) in 2008 concerning restrictions on the Ahmadiyya movement in Indonesia generated widespread controversy. While some groups opposed the plan, the Islamic Ummah Forum (FUI) threatened to oppose the SBY–JK administration





in the upcoming presidential election if the decree was not issued.³⁴

Opposition also came from civil society groups. The National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Belief, for example, threatened to take legal action against the government if it proceeded with the decision issued by the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Minister of Home Affairs, and the Attorney General. The alliance also planned to organize a public demonstration on 6 May 2008.

Cultural observer Goenawan Mohamad (GM) argued that dissolving Ahmadiyya would not merely concern the internal affairs of a religious sect. It would also signal a betrayal of important principles of human rights and the constitution. "If the government dares to betray part of the constitution, then it loses its legitimacy to govern," said GM, an intellectual and former editor-in-chief of *Tempo* magazine.³⁵

Iskandar Zulkarnain explained that, as an international Islamic movement headquartered in London and led by an Imam, Ahmadiyya remains fully committed to the teachings brought by the Prophet Muhammad. According to the former Director of the Graduate Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, the *shahada* of the Ahmadiyya remains unchanged: the testimony that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. The primary mission of Ahmadiyya, he added, is to restore the teachings of Islam and to promote the victory of Islam on earth.³⁶

As for information about Ahmadiyya circulating in society with labels such as "infidel" or "renegade," these are expressions loaded with emotion. The Prophet Muhammad once said: "Whoever calls another person or group an infidel, and if that accusation is not true, the words will return to him." Ultimately, the

authority to judge disbelief belongs to God. If Ahmadiyya is considered to have committed deviations, it would be better for non-Ahmadis to invite Ahmadis to engage in a constructive dialogue in a discussion forum. If Ahmadiyya is indeed misguided, such teachings would not endure for long. The Prophet Muhammad is also reported to have said that the claim of prophethood after him would not endure, and that anyone claiming prophethood would eventually meet an unnatural end.

Tensions related to Ahmadiyya will not subside if the government does not take decisive action to address what many consider to be the source of the conflict, namely the existence of Ahmadiyya itself. The presence of Ahmadis, who identify themselves as Muslims but promote teachings viewed by many Muslims as contradictory—particularly the recognition of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet after Prophet Muhammad—has provoked considerable controversy. In addition, attention has been drawn to the treatment of *Tadhkira*, a collection of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's revelations and writings, which is regarded by Ahmadiyya followers as an important reference for their religious life.

"Ahmadiyya has attracted significant media attention and has entered the social space of Indonesian society, generating both supportive and opposing reactions," said A. Muis Naharong, an expert on political Islam and a senior lecturer at Paramadina University. Naharong is a graduate of the University of Chicago, USA.³⁷

In this regard, the MUI again urged the government to act decisively on the Ahmadiyya issue so that it would not continue to create unrest in society that could potentially lead to riots. The MUI considered that the root causes of

³⁴ M. Syafii Anwar, Director of the International Center for Islam and Pluralism, interview/conversation in Jakarta, May 5, 2008.

³⁵ "Rawan Konflik, Tuntaskan Masalah Ahmadiyya!"

³⁶ Nanang RI Iskandar, "Ahmadiyya dan Perkembangan Gerakan Keislaman di Indonesia," *Unpublished Paper* (presented at Jalzah Salanah GAI-Yogyakarta, December 11, 2005).

³⁷ "Rawan Konflik, Tuntaskan Masalah Ahmadiyya!"





the violence in Cikeusik, Pandeglang, Banten began with public dissatisfaction with the government's lack of clarity in addressing the Ahmadiyya issue. The Chairman of the MUI, Sahal Mahfudh, emphasized that the council had issued a fatwa declaring Ahmadiyya a deviant sect. "Now it is up to the government to determine what action should be taken, and it would be inappropriate if the MUI were to interfere too much with the government's authority," he said.³⁸

Regulations addressing issues related to Ahmadiyya are already contained in Law No. 1 of 1965 concerning the Prevention of Religious Abuse and/or Blasphemy. In addition, the government has issued a Joint Ministerial Decree (*Surat Keputusan Bersama, SKB*) regarding Ahmadiyya. So far, the MUI has considered that the government lacks the courage to ban Ahmadiyya as mandated by the law. This perceived hesitation has led some groups in society to become impatient, sometimes resulting in vigilantism when they see Ahmadiyya followers openly disseminating their teachings. The Chairman of the MUI, Sahal Mahfudh, believes that the best solution to the Ahmadiyya issue would be to dissolve the organization through a presidential decree. Following the MUI's issuance of a fatwa declaring Ahmadiyya a deviant sect, various Islamic groups intensified their pressure on the government to disband the movement.

"If the government does not dissolve Ahmadiyya, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) warns that Ahmadiyya will face serious consequences. Ahmadiyya is heretical and must be dissolved. The government must distinguish between freedom of religion and religious desecration. For the sake of God, we are ready to face any risk. Ahmadiyya should not exist in the Republic of Indonesia. We are not afraid of whoever stands behind or defends Ahmadiyya;

whether the police, the military, NGOs, ministers, or the government," said the FPI chairman, Habib Rizieq Shihab, at the Al-Markaz Mosque in the Makassar Islamic Center complex, February 18, 2011.

Like the MUI, Habib Rizieq Shihab of the FPI views the teachings of Ahmadiyya as a form of defamation and tarnishing of Islam. Therefore, he urged the government to distinguish clearly between blasphemy and religious freedom. Both NU and Muhammadiyah recognize Prophet Muhammad as the final prophet and messenger. In contrast, critics argue that Ahmadiyya teachings do not acknowledge Muhammad as the last prophet in the same sense. Habib Rizieq Shihab further stated that there was no place for Ahmadiyya unless the government dissolved the organization. "If counterfeit money is destroyed and fake police officers are arrested, why should a false religion not also be eliminated?" he said.³⁹ According to Shihab, the government should not hesitate in addressing the Ahmadiyya issue and should insist on dissolving the organization. With existing laws and state institutions, the government has the capacity to take such action. He also argued that the government should not be overly concerned about accusations related to human rights as long as it clearly distinguishes between the protection of human rights and the issue of religious blasphemy, as emphasized by the FPI.

Some Islamic scholars have suggested that Ahmadiyya could be dissolved as an organization through legal channels, while at the same time its followers should be protected as citizens from threats and acts of violence. The absence of a firm stance from the government, they argued, would continue to provoke anger among some Muslims who feel that their religion has been insulted. On the other hand, Ahmadiyya followers may remain vulnerable

³⁸ "MUI Desak Pemerintah Tegas Terkait Masalah Ahmadiyah," *Antara News* (Semarang, Februari 18, 2011), <https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/246720/mui-desak-pemerintah-tegas-terkait-masalah-ahmadiyah>.

³⁹ "Rawan Konflik, Tuntaskan Masalah Ahmadiyah!"





because they become targets of hostility and confrontation.

The government and religious scholars are also expected to continue guiding Ahmadiyya followers to return to mainstream Islamic teachings based on the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet. If such efforts fail, some argue that Ahmadiyya followers should at least refrain from claiming affiliation with Islam. In this perspective, the Qur'an, which is widely recognized as the primary source of Islamic law, should serve as the main reference in determining what constitutes Islam rather than alternative interpretations such as those associated with Ahmadiyya.

In this context, the Minister of Religious Affairs at the time, Suryadharma Ali, proposed several options for addressing the Ahmadiyya issue. He emphasized that the Ahmadiyya crisis needed to be resolved promptly, given the sensitive social conditions that could potentially trigger conflict. One option was that Ahmadiyya could become a separate religious group without using Islamic attributes such as the Qur'an or mosques, which might help prevent further tensions. This proposal was intended as an effort by the government to prevent the Ahmadiyya controversy from escalating. In addition, several other options were discussed: first, Ahmadiyya could become a separate sect; second, Ahmadiyya could fully align with mainstream Islamic teachings; third, Ahmadiyya could be left as it was; and fourth, Ahmadiyya could be dissolved.

Based on the statements of the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Ahmadiyya community was also seen as possessing certain positive aspects, particularly a strong religious spirit. However, it was suggested that some of its followers might have received inaccurate information or interpretations about Islam. For example, in Cisere Village, Cisata Subdistrict, Pandeglang, 26 families (comprising 56 individuals) were reported to have returned

from Ahmadiyya teachings to mainstream Islamic practices. According to research conducted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ahmadiyya followers were distributed across several regions in Indonesia, including Kuningan in West Java, Cisalada in Banten, and West Nusa Tenggara. The total number of followers was estimated to range between 50,000 and 80,000 people. The Secretary General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Bahrul Hayat, confirmed that the government was reviewing several policy options regarding Ahmadiyya, including the possibility of dissolving the movement. "Therefore, they need to improve their understanding of Islam so that they can return to what is considered the correct form of Islamic teaching," he stated.

Regarding violence carried out in the name of religion, John L. Esposito, Professor of Religion and International Affairs at Georgetown University, stated that various negative consequences may arise from the phenomenon of religious revival. Among these consequences are the escalation of social conflict, the justification of acts of violence committed in the name of religion, and the manipulation of religion for political power.⁴⁰ In this regard, social and religious ethics expert Bernard Adeney-Risakotta observed that over the past fifteen years religious life in a number of countries has experienced a significant strengthening. This development has been accompanied by shifts in social, economic, and political life. Such circumstances do not benefit Ahmadiyya and other religious minorities. Considering the complexity of the problem, the Ahmadiyya issue needs to be resolved as soon as possible so that riots and acts of violence against them do not recur.

The Speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), Taufiq Kiemas, emphasized the need for the government to establish clear regulations regarding the position of Ahmadiyya. According to him, the status of

⁴⁰ "Kebangkitan Agama di Asia Tenggara," *Kompas*, Januari 6, 2011,

<https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2011/01/06/18573094/kebangkitan-agama-di-asia-tenggara>.





Ahmadiyya remains ambiguous, particularly regarding whether it should be considered part of Islam or a separate religious group or belief system. The PDI-P politician stated that, in order to reach a firm decision regarding the position of Ahmadiyya, the Ministry of Religious Affairs should invite all relevant parties so that any decision made would be the result of collective deliberation. Parties that should be invited to participate in such discussions include NU, Muhammadiyah, and MUI. "Of course, representatives from the Ahmadiyya community must also be present so that no unilateral decision is made," said Taufiq Kiemas.⁴¹

Responding to the various violent attacks against the Ahmadiyya community, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including the Setara Institute and the Wahid Institute, issued critical statements and protests. Their responses can be summarized as follows.

First, various civil society groups strongly condemned the barbaric actions carried out by intolerant groups. Acts of violence under any justification are barbaric, undermine social harmony in a plural society, and therefore should not be tolerated by the state.

Second, these groups strongly criticized the government's failure to protect a group of Indonesian citizens in Sintang whose constitutional rights to religion and worship were violated, and whose human dignity was degraded simply because of their choice of belief. In fact, the 1945 Constitution guarantees these fundamental rights. Thus, the government was considered to have failed to uphold constitutional protections.

Third, many observers viewed the attack as the culmination of three major factors. The first was the local government's accommodation of the demands of intolerant groups. From the outset, the district government was seen as yielding to pressure by issuing a local decree restricting Ahmadiyya activities. The second factor involved local political dynamics, in which

certain political elites were believed to have mobilized support from intolerant groups for political advantage, particularly when the Regent was ill and the Deputy Regent served as Acting Regent. The third factor was the failure of security forces to prevent the attacks and effectively respond to acts of violence. Threats, intimidation, and indications of violence had already been visible for a considerable period, especially since early August.

Fourth, civil society groups urged the police to carry out fair and impartial law enforcement by identifying and prosecuting the perpetrators as criminal suspects. At the same time, security forces were urged to ensure the safety of the victims and prevent further acts of violence.

Fifth, various groups called on the central government, particularly the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Attorney General's Office, to take serious steps to revoke the SKB concerning restrictions on Ahmadiyya. Empirically, the decree has been associated with numerous cases of rights violations and acts of violence against the Ahmadiyya community. In addition, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Religious Affairs were urged to revise the Joint Regulation of the Ministers (PBM No. 2) concerning the establishment of houses of worship, which has often been criticized for its problematic provisions and for being used to justify discrimination against religious minorities.

In this context, the Minister of Religious Affairs, Suryadharma Ali, and other senior officials in the administration of President SBY were urged to recognize their responsibility as public officials to prioritize democratic political values and to distinguish between their political roles and personal identities. In a democratic society, different groups may hold conflicting views about what constitutes a good life. Therefore, it is necessary to bracket personal moral and religious convictions in order to

⁴¹ Taufiq Kiemas, conversation/interview in Jakarta, September 20, 2010.





maintain social cooperation based on mutual respect.⁴²

By placing such “brackets” on personal beliefs, political values such as tolerance, justice, and social cooperation can be reflected in the leadership and policy decisions of public officials. In this way, discriminatory policies; such as restrictions on Ahmadiyya practices, virginity testing policies, bans on the screening of films related to LGBTQ themes, or the neglect of violence against minorities, can be avoided. This point is important because violence in Indonesia has often been described as a kind of hidden epidemic. As expressed by Immanuel Kant, ethical action should not be based merely on metaphysical objectives or particular religious, traditional, or cultural commands. Such commands often reflect the biases of specific traditions rather than universal ethical principles.⁴³

Mobilization for Violence

Mass mobilization and acts of violence against the Ahmadiyya community were the result of a complex and cumulative process. The mobilization of Muslims and the violence directed toward the Ahmadiyya community in Cikeusik, Pandeglang Regency, Banten Province, Java Island, Indonesia, resembled a stage prepared for a tragic outbreak of bloodshed. The MUI issued a fatwa in 1980 declaring the Ahmadiyya sect to be heretical and misleading. This fatwa was later reaffirmed in 2005 through the MUI Fatwa Decree No. 11/Munas VII/MUI/2005. According to Iskandar Zulkarnain, anarchic actions against members of the JAI began to intensify following the issuance of the MUI fatwa, which created widespread public controversy. The existence of this fatwa, which labeled Ahmadiyya as deviant,

encouraged segments of the Muslim majority to engage in discriminatory acts, including both physical and verbal attacks against the Ahmadiyya community. Some even regarded such actions as justified.⁴⁴

In this context, attempts to mobilize efforts to disband Ahmadiyya were initiated by residents of Cikeusik who opposed the group, particularly after a local Ahmadiyya figure, Suparman, resumed religious activities. Plans to disband Ahmadiyya in Cikeusik were carefully coordinated when K.H. Ujang became involved. He utilized his influence to mobilize the masses, and under his leadership potential sources for fundraising and mass mobilization were significantly expanded. Several networks were used by anti-Ahmadiyya groups to transform potential consensus mobilization into concrete action mobilization. These networks included religious leaders affiliated with NU, members of the FPI, students from Islamic boarding schools, local thugs, and ordinary community members. Through these networks, anti-Ahmadiyya actors succeeded in mobilizing thousands of participants.

The mobilization of Muslims to disband Ahmadiyya in Cikeusik relied heavily on networks of religious leaders, clerics, community figures, and local strongmen. The anti-Ahmadiyya figure K.H. Ujang also succeeded in formulating collective incentives that encouraged participation in the anti-Ahmadiyya movement. Initially, mobilization efforts were limited to consensus mobilization, namely efforts to promote the idea of banning Ahmadiyya in Cikeusik. However, over time these efforts evolved into broader mobilization. At religious gatherings, mosques, and community events, anti-Ahmadiyya activists began provoking

⁴² Gadis Arivia, “Pejabat Publik dan Etika Publik,” *Kompas*, Oktober 15, 2010, <http://cetak.kompas.com/read/2010/10/15/03105310/pejabat.publik.dan.etika.publik>.

⁴³ Tri Mahendra, “Kritisisme Immanuel Kant,” *Unpublished Paper* (presented at Social- Political Sciences Faculty, University of Jember, January 5, 2015).

⁴⁴ Iskandar Zulkarnain, *Gerakan Ahmadiyya di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2005); Iskandar Zulkarnain, “Eksistensi Ahmadiyah di Indonesia” (Paper presented at a workshop organized by P3DI, Secretariat General of DPR RI, Jakarta, 2011).





hostility by labeling Ahmadiyya as “heretical” and “misleading.” In this context, the dissemination of anti-Ahmadiyya narratives through religious lectures and mosque sermons became a common phenomenon in Indonesia between 2004 and 2014. Research conducted by the Setara Institute shows that 47.4% of respondents across ten Indonesian provinces received information about the alleged deviance of Ahmadiyya through religious study forums and mosque sermons. Meanwhile, 16.8% obtained such information through mass media, 2.2% through reading materials, and 33.7% did not respond.

In the context of social movement theory, the use of mosques and religious study gatherings as mobilization platforms resembles the role of churches in the American civil rights movement.⁴⁵ In mobilizing Islamic masses, clerics and religious leaders in Cikeusik frequently used Friday sermons and religious lectures in the Cikeusik subdistrict and Umbulan Village to remind local communities not to follow Ahmadiyya teachings because they were considered “heretical” and “misleading.” To encourage broader mobilization, they also presented various arguments concerning Ahmadiyya’s alleged deviance during religious study sessions. For example, they argued that Ahmadiyya does not recognize Prophet Muhammad as the final prophet, that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is considered a prophet, and that *Tadhkira* serves as the sacred text of Ahmadiyya.

They further emphasized that Ahmadiyya teachings deviated from *Ahlussunnah wal Jama’ah*, the tradition followed by the majority of residents in Cikeusik. These narratives motivated and encouraged Muslims to join the anti-Ahmadiyya movement. In this regard, the

MUI fatwa played an important role in legitimizing such attitudes. The close relationship between clerics in Pandeglang who opposed Ahmadiyya in Cikeusik and the FPI had existed for a long time. Central FPI leaders, such as Habib Rizieq Shihab, were often invited to Pandeglang to deliver sermons during celebrations of the Prophet’s birthday (*mawlid*). Clerics who were close to FPI were often affiliated with NU but were not formally part of the NU organizational structure at the provincial or district levels in Banten and Pandeglang.⁴⁶

After the attackers in Cikeusik dispersed, reports indicated that many participants continued discussing the incident while returning home. Some even spoke about payments allegedly given to individuals who participated in acts of violence against Ahmadiyya members. This suggests that financial and political incentives may also have played a role in the mobilization process. Participation in the anti-Ahmadiyya movement in Cikeusik was therefore not solely driven by collective religious motivations but also by selective incentives. The pursuit of political power as a material incentive was also evident in the role of Johar, the head of Umbulan Village. Johar strongly opposed the presence of Ahmadiyya in Cikeusik and reportedly used the Ahmadiyya issue as a political instrument to gain support during the village head election.⁴⁷

In the context of attacks against the Ahmadiyya minority, who are often labeled heretical, many members of the Muslim majority exhibit stereotypes, prejudice, and discriminatory attitudes toward Ahmadiyya. This helps explain why Ahmadiyya communities in Cikeusik and other parts of Indonesia have frequently experienced persecution and violent attacks. Lochhead, a professor of theology at the

⁴⁵ Quintan Wictorowicz, “Pendahuluan: Aktivisme Islam dan Teori Gerakan Sosial,” in *Gerakan Sosial Islam: Teori, Pendekatan, dan Studi Kasus*, ed. Quintan Wictorowicz, trans. Tim Penerjemah Paramadina (Yogyakarta: Gading Publishing & Yayasan Paramadina, 2012).

⁴⁶ Siswo Mulyartono, “Kekerasan Anti-Ahmadiyah di Cikeusik, Pandeglang: Pendekatan Mobilisasi” (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2014), 50–55.

⁴⁷ Mulyartono, “Kekerasan Anti-Ahmadiyah di Cikeusik, Pandeglang: Pendekatan Mobilisasi,” 56–68.





University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, argues that all religious traditions contain elements of isolationism (where each faith develops within its own boundaries), confrontationalism (where those of different beliefs are viewed as rivals), and sometimes even hostility. When considering the fundamental logic of power in every religion, their third limits become even more porous and hazy.⁴⁸

During the period between 2006 and 2009, national political debates included efforts to pass the Anti-Pornography Bill, while at the regional level at least twenty-five cities and regencies implemented local moral regulations inspired by interpretations of *sharia*. This development reflected the growing influence of religion-based politics, which in turn highlighted the potential of religious identity to provoke tensions with minority groups. Acts of terrorism, such as the World Trade Center attacks in New York on September 11, 2001, the Bali bombings in 2002 and 2005, the Madrid bombings in 2004, and the Jakarta bombings in 2004, all use religion as an ideological basis, and so do other forms of violence in the name of religion on a global scale as a result of Western dominance and hegemony across the Islamic world. Against the backdrop of Western imperialism and market fundamentalism, Islam can be utilized as an intellectual excuse for violence in Islamic society. Peace rallies in cities across Europe and the United States have called for a U.S. and British withdrawal from Iraq, but they must also be seen as a rejection of the free market fundamentalism and international violence that are hidden behind President George W. Bush's doctrine of "democratic imperialism".⁴⁹

Many international peace movements with audiences in Indonesia reflect the aspirations and hopes of religious communities for a world

characterized by greater tolerance and global solidarity, capable of promoting social justice. Religion indeed imparts lessons of love, acceptance, and goodness. However, as a form of opposition to the hegemony of global capitalism and superpowers that have perpetuated immeasurable structural violence, a series of violent acts fueled by religious fundamentalism and ethnocentrism have frequently occurred in many regions of the world.

The need for accommodation in Indonesia is best understood in the context of the Bhinneka Tunggal Ika Alliance's peaceful interfaith march in Jakarta in early September 2005, the Balinese community's rejection of the Anti-Pornography and Pornoaction (APP) Bill, and the opposition to both the violence and the APP Bill by pro-democracy activists and various national groups. Actions rejecting sectarianism are driven by religious communities' fears of violence perpetrated by members of certain faiths against others, as well as opposition to the rise of Islamic extremism and the decline of tolerance and inclusiveness within the Islamic community.⁵⁰ Violence against Ahmadiyya remains a serious issue in Indonesia due to religious and philosophical disagreements. The public expects the SBY government, democratically elected by the people, to demonstrate firmness and a commitment to a religious life that is tolerant, non-violent, harmonious, and dignified. This expectation is reflected in the peaceful and non-violent nature of recent protests. In response to recent acts of violence perpetrated by intolerant, sectarian, fanatical, and puritanical organizations that readily accuse the Ahmadiyah minority of heresy, SBY's government must also recognize and protect pluralism. Attacks on the Ahmadiyya community have contributed to a

⁴⁸ Lochhead, *The Dialogical Imperative: A Christian Reflection on Interfaith Encounter*.

⁴⁹ Herdi Sahrasad, "Kekerasan Berjubah Agama," *Sinar Harapan*, Juni 26, 2006; Imaduddin Rahmat, "Peta Pemikiran dan Gerakan Radikalisme Islam di Indonesia," *Unpublished Paper* (presented at Rumah Kitab Bekasi,

January 26, 2012); Sandal, "Framing Religious Outbidding: Al-Qaida, Islamic State, and Intra-religious Competition."

⁵⁰ Pamungkas, "Social Resilience of Minority Group: Study on Syiah Refugees in Sidoarjo and Ahmadiyah Refugees in Mataram."





decline in social and religious tolerance in Indonesia.

The assertion that our society is pluralistic, diverse, and composed of various tribes and religions merely creates the impression of fragmentation rather than true pluralism, according to Nurcholish Madjid, a leading Muslim intellectual. Pluralism, however, should not be narrowly defined as a negative concept based solely on its effectiveness in eliminating fanaticism. "The true affinity of diversity in the bonds of civilization" is the key to understanding pluralism. There remains some concern that pluralism could cause problems in Indonesia.⁵¹ However, when confronted with unrest and interreligious violence, politicians and bureaucrats typically dismiss these incidents as mere "spontaneous reactions." Despite the fact that there is a lot more going on here than meets the eye.

Conclusion

The explanation above shows that, in the past (2004–2014), the Indonesian government appeared powerless in the face of intolerant forces targeting the Ahmadiyya and Shiite minorities for harassment and persecution, which constitutes a violation of human rights. The state failed to demonstrate a democratic stance by not protecting the religious freedom of all its citizens without exception. In this context, the pro- and anti-Ahmadiyya positions have unnecessarily polarized the community. However, Indonesia must remain level-headed, engage in dialogue, and promote reason to resolve the issue without resorting to violence. Emphasizing political ideals that underpin justice will also strengthen the law and the constitution, a fact that public officials should recognize. The rights of minorities must never be compromised to uphold regional policies that violate the constitution.

What is expected of state leaders, such as the President, Minister of Religion, and policy and decision makers, is the ability to remain unbiased when making policy decisions and to treat all groups fairly. They must support the vulnerable, minorities, and marginalized populations by empowering people to make policy decisions based on their own free will, while holding them accountable for their actions in accordance with high moral and ethical standards. Therefore, deliberative democracy, cooperation, and dialogue among religious groups are essential at the grassroots level in an emancipatory and participatory manner to prevent and overcome acts of violence committed in the name of religion, which are often linked to interests and power.

Concrete cooperation between religious groups for equality and humanity is most meaningful and effective when grounded in shared inspiration and religious ideals. Equally important is the clear, unbiased, fair, and decisive implementation of the rule of law, alongside a collective appreciation for multiculturalism and pluralism. Drawing lessons from the past, the state and civil society must collaborate to prevent recurring violence and avoid creating a "peaceful but arid atmosphere." This cooperation involves addressing potential conflicts of interest and prioritizing a social justice agenda that ensures religious freedom, basic social and civil rights, and other fundamental needs are met. Additionally, it is essential to prevent acts of violence that undermine national unity. While completely eradicating religiously motivated violence may be impossible, it is feasible to significantly reduce the likelihood of such acts occurring in the future.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Al Chaidar, Associate Professor in the Department of

⁵¹ Nurcholish Madjid, "Masyarakat Madani dan Investasi Demokrasi: Tantangan dan Kemungkinan," *Republika*, Agustus 10, 1999.





Anthropology at Malikussaleh University, Aceh, for his helpful comments on this paper. Any remaining errors are the authors' responsibility.

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Interview

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