TOPIC

Islamic Guidelines for Promoting Religious Tolerance and Countering Intolerance

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Abstract

This article addresses two key issues. First, the stagnation of the national tolerance score highlights the persistence of intolerant activities that continue to impact the nation. Second, the ambiguity surrounding the concept of tolerance makes it challenging to implement religious moderation effectively. These issues illustrate the disconnect between the theoretical understanding of tolerance and its practical application. The study employs a literature-based approach combined with a conceptual framework and descriptive analysis. The conceptual approach focuses on examining and defining key ideas and theoretical frameworks related to tolerance and religious moderation, clarifying abstract concepts and foundational principles. Descriptive analysis systematically interprets and describes existing data from prior studies and literature on the subject. The research proposes a framework for fostering religious tolerance grounded in Islamic principles, offering practical solutions to combat intolerance. The framework advocates replacing verbal and physical harassment with supportive and cooperative actions. It also suggests transforming destructive behaviors— such as demolishing places of worship—into constructive efforts, including assisting in their restoration and rebuilding. This framework aims to advance religious moderation and harmony through actionable and normative strategies, bridging the gap between theory and practice in fostering tolerance.

Keywords: religious harmony, Islamic moderation, countering intolerance

Introduction

Islamic-based tolerance studies have been widely undertaken. However, these studies fall short of providing a thorough analysis of tolerance indicators. The majority of them study the Qur'an's tolerance, such as those written by Afriani et al., (Afriani et al., 2023) and Masrul Anam et al., (Anam et al., 2023) and Rabiah Muhammad Nasir et al. (Muhammad Nasir & Arisandy, 2022) and so on. Although the Qur'anic verses indicating tolerance are valuable sources of information, they lack practical application, as they overlook the need for adopting open perspectives in a diverse society. Additionally, some scholars, such as Ach Zayyadi and M. Syukri Ismail, analyze tolerance from the perspective of hadith (Ach. Zayyadi & Ismail, 2024). However, the coherence of tolerant and intolerant attitudes was not studied in their research.

Furthermore, much research has been done on tolerance in the context of Islam, such as the writings of Adeng Mukhtar Ghazali (Ghazali, 2016) but these studies mainly address the

fundamental principles of tolerance.

Therefore, the author examines the reciprocal interaction between tolerant and intolerant attitudes to initiate a new discussion on understanding tolerance. In order to make this concept more tangible and understandable, this article offers to establish a crucial tolerance parameter.

The index of religious tolerance in Indonesia has stalled at number 5, from a scoring between numbers 1 and 7 (Madrim, 2023). This demonstrates that efforts for religious moderation in Indonesia have stagnated as intolerance keeps afflicting the country (Lidwna, 2021). Given Indonesia's diversity of religions, races, and languages, the significant number of intolerant incidents poses a threat to societal stability and peace. Unfortunately, instances of intolerance are frequently observed in abuses committed by majority groups who perceive themselves as more powerful and consequently oppose minority groups through hate speech, discrimination, destruction of places of worship, and belief-based sanctions (SETARA Institute, 2022). According to Kompas, penalties based on belief were the primary causes of intolerance, followed by incorrect religious teachings and prohibitions on religious activity (Arandito, 2023). These pieces of information demonstrate that religious differences, if not managed with respect and moderation, continue to be a substantial obstacle to national unity rather than natural pathways to harmony and peace.

At least two key factors contribute to religious intolerance: academic and non-academic aspects. Academic factors promoting intolerance include a lack of understanding of religious literature, compounded by extreme fanaticism about diversity (Arifin, 2021, p. 14). One significant cause of intolerance is limited literacy and inadequate education, especially concerning the importance of harmony and peace. Although literacy levels may be higher in the West, they have not fully addressed the issue of religious moderation. People with limited literacy are more vulnerable to provocation, which is dangerous, as they lack the ability to effectively filter information.

The Arabic proverb states: "The more knowledge a person possesses, the less they are inclined to disdain or reject others; and the less knowledge they have, the more they are inclined to do so." ('Îsâ, 2009, p. 122). This means that the broader a person's literacy and understanding, the more tolerant they become. Conversely, limited knowledge leads to greater intolerance. Intellectual insight plays a significant role in fostering inclusivity, while shallow knowledge cultivates exclusivity. It is akin to the behavior of children at kindergarten, elementary, and middle school levels, who often quarrel, compared to the more stable and accepting disposition of individuals at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Jamarudin, 2016).

The second key factor contributing to religious intolerance is nonacademic, influenced by social, economic, and political issues. Social factors arise from inequalities and the growth of a society centered on individual interests. Economic factors relate to inequality and poverty, which can lead to frustration and polarization. Political factors include weak regulations and inadequate penalties for intolerant behavior (Seftiani et al., 2020, p. 126). Such injustice transmits resentment, leading to intolerant ideas. This is precisely what Azyumardi Azra said: sectarian resentment is a chronic condition that promotes religious intolerance among people from varied backgrounds (Azra, 2016, p. 9). In this context, discriminatory treatment and religious differences are often seen as sources of resentment.

The definition of tolerance itself is not standardized. Because tolerance arises from actions and behaviors, rather than theoretical doctrines. This tolerance evolved in response to numerous instances of intolerant events initiated by radicalism and terrorism (Hamzah, 2018, p. 21; Misrawi, 2010). Norms are established based on empirical data. As a result, some people view tolerance as an endless interaction in which multiple beliefs are combined and considered to be the same or a single belief. These interpretations are generally liberal (Misrawi, 2010). On the other hand, other people perceive it as a way of living life without bothering or

offending one another. It's only that they have a tendency to be radical when working with those who hold different opinions. Such perspectives are often exclusive (Anwar, 2021, p. 268; Misrawi, 2010).

According to Zuhairi Misrawi, the transition from intolerance to tolerance marks an important phase in a nation's civilizational advancement. As a result, tolerance ideals are shaped by the nature of a country and its civilization (Misrawi, 2020, p. 161). This explains why tolerance has numerous interpretations and standards that are quite complicated since they are influenced by a social community's backgrounds.

Based on this reality, the authors aim to analyze tolerance and intolerance by proposing an Islamic framework to guide the promotion of religious harmony and the reduction of intolerance. Such study is significant since the meaning of tolerance is frequently dragged in several directions, resulting in a biased interpretation. The vagueness of tolerant and intolerant indicators has a significant impact on religious moderation, which is today organized and heavily promoted by the government under the Ministry of Religion (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019, p. vi). For instance, this framework of tolerance serves as a guide for fostering religious moderation while promoting tolerant principles. On the other hand, the advantage of this framework lies in its ability to clarify and deepen our understanding of tolerance in contemporary society. It is expected that this enhanced comprehension of tolerance will help reduce intolerant behaviors, increase religious tolerance scores in cities, and contribute to the broader goal of achieving peaceful coexistence. The academic value of this work is its provision of relevant insights into the contradictions surrounding tolerance, offering renewed perspectives grounded in Islamic philosophy that emphasizes the principles of peace.

Research Method

The research method employed in this study is a literature-based approach, with a primary focus on tolerance. This study utilizes a conceptual approach, which involves examining and defining key concepts, theories, and frameworks relevant to tolerance and religious moderation. The aim is to clarify abstract ideas and identify underlying principles. Additionally, the study applies descriptive analysis, which systematically reviews and interprets existing data from previous studies and scholarly literature on the topic. Through this method, the research begins by presenting the central idea and then provides detailed explanations and discussions in the following sections.

Results and Discussion
Neglect as the Minimal Expression of Tolerance

The lowest level of religious tolerance is just an act of Neglect. Given the concept of tolerance, it intends to allow individuals or communities to practice their religious ceremonies freely and without interference. This neglect might be interpreted in different ways. The first one is a deliberate choice to ignore the minority groups. This indicates that someone who is unconcerned about the existence of believers of other religions and allows them to do their religious ceremonies is enough to be considered tolerant. The second one is a passive acceptance of diversity without active engagement. This might be inferred when people from various religions are welcomed to worship or create their own space of worship. The first interpretation is passive, and it is a better match for regular people. Meanwhile, the second interpretation is active, referring to policymakers or local state officials (Masduqi, 2011, p. 9).

The existing definitions of negligence and consent in Islam have a solid logical and religious foundation. Among them is the Prophet Muhammad's decision, which allowed Christian religious leaders to worship at the Nabawi Mosque despite the companions' attempts to prevent it, however, the Messenger of Allah ordered the companions to withdraw and allow the Christian representatives to worship (Al-Bayhaqî, 1988 Volume 7, p. 382). With this hadith, Ibn Qayyim stated that non-Muslims can visit mosques and carry out their

religious ceremonies alongside Muslims (Ibn Qayyim, 1996 Volume 3, p. 638). As-Syafi'i stated that it is permissible for non-Muslims to visit mosques other than Masjidil Haram ('Amiyya, 2001, Volumes 3, 10). Ali bin Abi Bakr An-Nasir, who launched *tahqiq* on the book *Al-Jawab As-Sahih Liman Baddala Dinal Masih*, stated that what Ibn Qayyim stated was an acceptable perspective with stronger argumentation (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1999, p. 185).

The presence of 60 Christians from the Najrân region served as a precursor to the revelation of Surah al-Maidah, which documented the significant conversation that occurred between Najrân Christians and the Prophet Muhammad (Al-Baghawî, 1997 Volume 4, p. 234). Prior to commencing the conversation, these Najrân Chritians indicated a desire to perform their rites of worship at the mosque. The companions harbored a desire to stop them, as the prescribed worship was to be performed within the mosque, in the Messenger of Allah's presence. The Prophet then instructed, "Let them alone." The response of the Prophet, according to Az-Zarqani, emphasized reverence for those who are followers of different faiths. As a sign of appreciation for their peaceful entry into Madinah, the Messenger of Allah ensured their safety by giving protection guarantees. It was forbidden for companions to disrupt the worship of these Najrân Christians. This is done out of reverence for faith and not in acknowledgment of falsehood (Az-Zarqânî, 1996 Volume 12, p. 187).

Abu Bakr, in his position as the first Caliph, also provided instruction to his companions planning an expedition to Syria, a predominantly Christian region, that during battle they should refrain from attacking women and children, cutting down trees, or harming individuals carrying out prayers in churches as well as pastors ('Âbidîn, 2002 Volume 6, p. 215). Umar bin Khattab acknowledged this when he liberated Baitul Maqdis. Umar Ra permitted the churches in the vicinity to continue to exist and operate normally. Umar Ra gave a sense of safety assurance for Christians to carry out their prayers at Baitul Maqdis, even though the Caliph's supremacy was incredible at the time.

Indeed, he was at the pinnacle of power since he won battles and conquered many territories. However, he remained a humanist towards his fellow human beings (An-Nawawî, n.d. Volume 21, p. 155).

The Messenger of Allah, as Medina's ruler, is more concerned with societal stability and resolving conflicts over religion. This may be shown by implementing mutual consolidation. The Messenger of Allah's first initiative in Madinah was to ensure the safety and security of Aws and Khazraj people, as well as Jews leading to a pledge of peaceful coexistence. This agreement became known as the Madinah Charter (Az-Za'bî, 2009, p. 61). Jewish villages, such as the Quray"a, Qaynûqâ', and Nâdhir, were located fairly distant from Medina's center. It took hours to reach their place. However, Jews were responsible for many of the issues that arose in Medina. The Messenger of Allah recognized that the people of Medina had been waging a civil war for a long time, driven by the Jewish community from outside. For this factor, the Messenger of Allah engaged in reconciliation to provide safety, harmony, and stability amongst communities, allowing them to live in unity and carry out their routines smoothly. Indirectly, the Medina charter represents the Prophet's yearning for unity above enmity and turmoil (Al-Jamîl, 2002, p. 64). Moreover, the freedom to engage in religious activities is guaranteed as a fundamental human right, governed by both national and international regulations (Ishak & Mikea Manitra, 2022).

Reactualization of the Tafsir La Ikraha Fiddin

The interpretation of "There is no compulsion in religion" needs to be expanded and refreshed in its meaning within a modern context. Conventional exegesis interprets it as meaning that no one should be forced or pressured into embracing a religion (Ibn Kathîr, 2005 Volume 3, p. 313). This implies that coercion here is understood as an attempt at repressive Islamization. It is not permissible to force others to follow the truth that a person believes in. This textual interpretation (conventional exegesis) overlooks the original

intent of the verse, which is to prevent Islam from being perceived as an extremist religion. However, Islam should be understood, experienced, and practiced as a religion of peace that does not seek to harm anyone, whether fellow Muslims or, especially, non-Muslims. With this reversed interpretation, the verse emphasizes that inviting others to Islam should be done with wisdom and kindness.

There is no compulsion in religion must be understood as an effort to establish a humane religious life. Compulsion here should be understood as the absence of anarchic, discriminatory, and manipulative actions between religious communities (Az-Zuhaylî, 1991 Volume 3, p. 21). The anarchism referred to here is the rejection of anything related to other religions. This rejection aims to dominate a particular area and impose a value system that benefits only one group, while sidelining or ignoring minority groups. This verse highlights freedom of belief and the right to practice religious activity (Zahrah, 1980 Volume 10, p. 50). The communal exclusivism, which stems from an inflated sense of group identity, leads to discriminatory actions that marginalize followers of different religions. This often results in extremist behaviors such as expulsions, beatings, and the destruction of places of worship. While every individual is granted the freedom to express their beliefs as long as it does not harm others, this freedom is often disregarded. As a result, a malicious conspiracy arises that seems to justify the actions of certain groups within the community (Vereinte Nationen, 2023, p. 2).

Religion should be based on voluntary faith and commitment, not through coercion or compulsion. Acts of coercion or compulsion in the name of religion can have a negative impact on the image of that religion. These actions may foster resentment and drive others away from the religion. The dignity of the religion becomes tarnished due to the behavior of its followers. Therefore, religious practice must be grounded in respect and kindness. A person will not adopt or change their religion unless they truly believe in its teachings. It is both an individual and societal responsibility to present the religion in a thoughtful and encouraging manner (Sa'îd, 1997, p. 30). The verse mentioned above, "There is no compulsion in religion", represents the freedom of belief and religion, which consequently influences the freedom to perform religious practices (Al-'Ulwânî, 2006, p. 96). Religious differences are part of the inherent nature that Allah SWT has granted to humanity, and faith itself is a divine gift from Him. As such, people should avoid perceiving these differences with resentment or hostility (Tâhûn, 1998, p. 176). This is related to the verse in the Qur'an; If your Lord had willed, everyone on Earth would have believed. Are you (prophet Muhammad) going to demand that they become believers? (QS. Yunus; 99)(Nasr et al., 2015, p. 988).

Harmony of Religious Communities in Islam

In essence, relations between different religions are founded on goodwill and unity. Despite their religious differences, they share a commitment to humanity and justice (Sâbiq, 2016 Volume 3, p. 10). This idea is explained in verse; "Allah does not ban you from doing good deeds and being fair to people who are not against you over religion or exile you from your homeland. Allah likes those who behave justly." (QS. Mumtahanah; 8). This verse encourages someone to do good deeds and show compassion to non-Muslims as long as they are not fighting with Muslims. The aforementioned compassion applies to a social extent, such as visiting non-Muslims, giving them gifts, and aiding people in poverty. Meanwhile, justice does not imply ignoring and treating Muslims differently from non-Muslims in social situations (Ash-Shubaylî, n.d., p. 76).

The verse above categorizes non-Muslims into two groups. First, non-Muslims who expressed hatred by waging war, or expelling Muslims, or other comparable actions. Second, non-Muslims who live within a civic structure, avoiding actions that undermine unity. Regarding the first group, Muslims must have a clear stance and even belief that they must be handled as adversaries. As stated in the verse: 'Let not the believers take disbelievers as allies, leaving aside the believers' (QS Ali Imran:

28). This verse implies that conspiracy or alliances with non-Muslims that harm other Muslims are not permitted in Islam. The context of this verse does not pertain to general social interactions with non-Muslims where kindness is allowed. Instead, its deeper meaning refers to forming alliances with non-Muslim groups that could potentially harm the interests of other Muslims. (Tâhir, 1986 Volume 3, p. 216).

The other verse that mentions the ban on forging allegiance with non-Muslims is: "O you who believe, do not make Jews and Christians your loyal friends." (QS al-Maidah: 51). Tabari, a classical exegete, believes that having an emotional relationship or friendship with a non-Muslim tends to result in a fanatical relationship that favors the non-Muslim side. This discriminatory societal treatment overshadows the value of other Muslims, including the Prophet Muhammad and Allah Swt (At-Tabarî, 2009 Volume 8, p. 507). This is banned since the connection has deviated from the path of justice. The reaffirmation of the ban against giving generosity to non-Muslims applies if they are adversaries, as stated more precisely in the verse; "Do not make my adversary and your adversary your allies." (QS. Al-Mumtahanah; 1). According to Ibnu Kathîr, this ban on relationships is meant for non-Muslim organizations that proclaim war and animosity against Muslim groups, rendering them unworthy of being employed as intimate friends, allies, or partners (Ibn Kathîr, 1994 Volume 3, p. 380).

In the second category, Non-Muslims who live within a Muslim territory or state but immerse themselves in the existing social structure, promoting humanism and peaceful conduct. This indicates that just because you practice a different religion does not imply that you must fully separate yourself from non-Muslims. However, it is appropriate to be courteous to one another and foster a peaceful, secure, and enjoyable atmosphere. During his lifetime, the Prophet Muhammad was given a helping hand by Jewish children and followers of Judasim. The Prophet Rasulullah who had a debt to a Jew, indeed had paid it back with his private armor (Al-Kirmânî, 2008 Volume 6, p.

423). The Prophet's reactions in this manner demonstrate that there is no actual social distinction between Muslims and Non-Muslims. He did not carry out ethnic or religious polarization. Even when insulted, the Prophet never became infuriated. He wants peace over conflicts. Once, a group of Jews altered the greeting to 'assamu alaika', which means 'woe to you'. The Prophet was not furious and did not retaliate. That does not imply he is weak; rather, he desires peace (Al-'Asqalânî, 2001 Volume 12, p. 293).

Awareness of tolerance must be fostered by everyone, from childhood through adulthood. The involvement of educators and community leaders plays a significant role in promoting harmony and social solidarity (Zulkifli et al., 2023). Cultivating social solidarity by putting aside ego and differences is a concrete expression of interfaith peace. After all, the sense of dominance is the root cause of intolerance (Abdillah et al., 2023). Islam itself upholds a strong concept of human rights protection, framed within the objectives of Sharia (*maqasid al-sharia*). The implementation of maqasid al-sharia is not limited to Muslims but is also applicable to non-Muslims, and anything that threatens the existence of *maqasid al-sharia* is, in principle, forbidden, and unjustifiable (Qodir et al., 2023).

Countering Verbal Bullying with Verbal Support

"Avoid mocking (gods) who worship other than Allah SWT, as they will blame Allah SWT for showing hostility without reason". (QS. Al-An'am; 108)". This verse is a guide to remaining in verbal control during interreligious interactions since it might lead to verbal conflicts. By broadening its meaning, the verse bans attacking or mocking non-Muslims over their deity, method of worship, beliefs, religious symbols, or anything else that may bring criticism and mockery against Muslims. The reason behind this is that such activities could stir up animosity and wrath, leading to unconditional criticism and antagonism (Ar-Râzî, 1999 Volume 13, p. 239). When this occurs, the likelihood of non-Muslims converting to

Islam goes down, and Islamophobia develops. So, indirectly, the verse above indicates the importance of avoiding doing or saying anything that causes non-Muslims to disdain or be resentful of Islam or its believers.

Regarding the meaning of this verse, Al-Marâghî said that devotion that causes harm should be rejected. Anything that creates harm is unacceptable (Al-Marâghî, 1946 Volume 7, p. 214). The statement indicates that directing non-Muslims to goodness in methods that are not favorable, resulting in negative things being created, is banned and not justified. Furthermore, Islam prohibits insults, mockery, or other forms of verbal abuse. The example of respectful preaching is drawn from the verse's instruction: "Speak to him (Pharaoh) with gentle words, hoping he will recognize (Islam) or be afraid of (Allah's punishment)." (QS. Thaha; 44). Gentle words mean that they do not irritate or upset the listener (Zahrah, 1980 Volume 3, p. 4730). Even though Pharaoh was clearly misguided, it is essential to maintain gentleness and respect when delivering a message. It's the same in social situations with non-Muslims. It would be preferable if relationships between religious communities were founded on preaching standards, including respect and polite behavior. Non-Muslims become attentive and curious because of a Muslim's higher ethical behaviors.

In the context of giving moral encouragement verbally to Non-Muslims, the subject matter is divided into two categories. First, provide moral support during non-religious occasions, such as wishing for a quick recovery or congratulating someone on milestones like the birth of a child or a marriage, to encourage and inspire (Al-'Uthaymîn, 2002 Volume 8, p. 76). The Muslim scholars have no objections, and this might be beneficial in terms of fostering a culture of tolerance and mutual caring. Second, provide moral support for religious celebrations. For example, wishing Catholics a Merry Christmas. There are differing opinions on this. Some scholars argue that it should be prohibited because it corresponds to misconduct, encourages immoral behavior, and mimics non-Muslims (Ibn Qayyim, 1997 Volume 1, p. 205). On the other hand, some scholars believe that such actions can be seen as promoting good relationships across religious communities, emphasizing mutual respect and goodwill (*Hukm Tahni'ah Ahl Al-Kitâb Bi A'yâdihim Wa Munâsibatihim*, 2019).

Al-Qardâwî emphasized that the *fatwas* of classical Muslim scholars, including those of Ibn Taimiyah, discouraged wishing Christians a Merry Christmas, as these rulings were based on the social and historical context of past eras. These views were shaped by the circumstances of their time and the specific challenges faced by Muslims in those periods. Conflict with non-Muslims used to be more aggressive, but it is now less aggressive. As a result, it is permitted to wish non-Muslims a good holiday, particularly those with whom one has family or familial ties, and those who frequently treat us well. As a result, their charity should be appreciated in the same way, or even better (Al-Qardâwî, 2009, p. 86). Al-Qardâwî stated that if the early Muslim scholars who held more extreme views on such matters were alive today, they would likely revise their harsh *fatwas* to more moderate ones, especially in contexts where Muslim-majority societies coexist with religious minorities (Al-Qardâwî, 2001, p. 150). In the case of differing opinions like this, one is free to follow any opinion. However, the best choice is the one that brings the most positive impact for oneself (Al-Haytamî, n.d. Volume 4, p. 315).

Countering Action Bullying with Action Support

Non-Muslims within our communities should be regarded as opportunities for da'wah, not as adversaries. In the context of da'wah, Islam emphasizes compassion and fostering unity, rather than promoting hostility or enmity. Physical violence, misconduct, and injustice toward non-Muslims are strictly forbidden in Islam, as reflected in the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him); Whoever mistreats non-Muslims (who do not declare war), diminishes their rights, makes excessive demands, or takes anything from them without their permission is my adversary on the Day of

Resurrection (HR. Abi Dawud) (Sulaymân, n.d., Verse 3052). The context of this *hadith* symbolizes Muslims as the majority and non-Muslims as the minority. The Prophet Muhammad SAW firmly opposed any form of mistreatment toward non-Muslims, emphasizing that being the majority does not grant Muslims the right to act unjustly. He condemned actions such as exploiting non-Muslims, depriving them of their rights, overburdening them with excessive taxes or tributes, verbally or physically abusing them, or taking their possessions without consent (Al-Haq, 1996 Volume 8, p. 304).

In *fiqh*, non-Muslims are categorized into two groups: those who engage in hostility against Muslims and those who live peacefully without declaring war. Each group is treated according to distinct principles tailored to their circumstances (Ash-Sharwânî, n.d. Volume 9, p. 292). In the Indonesian context, non-Muslims who live within the Pancasila concept are seen as non-Muslims who do not oppose Muslims; hence, their position and treatment are equivalent to those of Muslims (Asmani, 2021, p. 211). In this way of thinking, *fiqh* offers guarantees of safety in the essential, secondary, and tertiary sectors by respecting Islam's five essential principles, which are religion rights, life rights, family rights, property rights, and intellectual rights. The guarantee is carried out by taking action against offenders and those who seek to take away these five essential principles indiscriminately (Ash-Shirbînî, 1994 Volume 4, p. 335). This proves that Islam values the concepts of justice and compassion in the midst of religious diversity. Everyone may experience the love of Islam along with a right to fair regulations (Al-Kâfî, 2006, p. 246).

Action support such as giving gifts, visiting those who are ill, comforting people affected by tragedy, and other comparable actions are not harmful for non-Muslims. One often debated issue is whether Muslims should participate in guarding non-Muslim churches or houses of worship during holiday celebrations. Critics argue that such actions may overstep boundaries, as they could be seen as supporting or promoting immoral practices (*I'anah Alal Ma'asiy*), which is not permitted (Al-Lajnah Ad-

Dâimah Li Al-Buhûth Al-'Ilmiyyah Wa Al-Iftâ,' n.d., Volumes 2, 481). However, this understanding is not the only truth, as other scholars argue that protecting churches can be justified. The term "facilitating immoral practices" has two conditions: first, providing the means that directly enable the occurrence of such practices, and second, when the intention is to support those immoral practices (Al-'Uthmânî, 2003, p. 356). The protection of churches during holiday celebrations is not the main factor that enables immoral practices to occur, as such practices could still happen without the protection. Even without guarding the churches, non-Muslim communities can still perform their worship (which some Muslim may consider to be immoral practice). The intention behind guarding the churches is not to protect the church buildings, but rather to maintain national security and promote social harmony among religious communities (Tim Bahtsul Masail Himasal Lirboyo, 2018, p. 65).

In the Indonesian context, the possibility of terrorism attacking non-Muslims and their places of worship is part of a long history that cannot be forgotten. Until 2023, 148 terrorists had been arrested (Muhammad, 2023). This statistic reveals that the country's safety and stability remain in danger. As a result, according to Izzudin bin Abdussalam's *fatwa*, every Muslim has a duty to assist the government in defending the country from savages and traitors; hence, sustaining the nation's stability and well-being is a public responsibility (Al-'Izzuddîn, 2000 Volume 1, p. 228). Such actions act as a form of individual justice aimed at ensuring safety and fostering overall peace, and every Muslim is obligated to contribute ('Abdullah, 2006, p. 135). Since threats and disruptions to non-Muslim worshippers still potentially occur, defending the church must be seen as a way of avoiding harm in order to reap positive aspects, such as preserving the right to life and fulfilling religious rights, in order to foster peace and safety among those of different faiths. Guarding of places of worship must be approached with careful consideration of the context. If threats or disruptions occur, especially those made in the name of Islam, it becomes crucial to guard

places of worship in order to restore Islam's dignity as a religion of peace.

Countering Destruction with Construction of Non-Muslim Places of Worship

Basically, destroying non-Muslim places of worship is never acceptable, whether in times of peace or war, especially when done in the name of religion. This principle is reflected in the peace agreement between Prophet Muhammad and the Christians of Najrân, which aligns with Islamic teachings that prohibit such actions. The Prophet Muhammad SAW ensured the protection of their land, lives, families, religion, and places of worship, demonstrating the Islamic values of justice, respect, and the safeguarding of religious freedoms (As-Sahâranfûrî, n.d. Volume 13, p. 383). This peace agreement proves that, as long as there is mutual consent, human rights must be protected. Abu Bakar continued to uphold the mutual agreement with the people of Najrân (At-Tabarî, 1967 Volume 3, 165). 'Amr ibn al-'Âs made a similar agreement when advancing into Egypt, promising not to harm Christian places of worship (At-Tabarî, 1967 Volume 2, p. 513). Khalid bin Walid endorsed a similar policy during the expedition to Damascus, ensuring that the Damascus citizens' places of worship were not disrupted (Amîdî, 2017, p. 129). Abû Ubaydah also reached an agreement on peace with the Hims inhabitants, ensuring the safety of their lives, land, homes, and places of worship (Al-Wâqidî, 1997 Volume 1, p. 111).

Based on the historical data shown above, it can be inferred that when Islamic army generals such as Khalid bin Walid, Abû Ubaydah, and 'Amr ibn al-'Âs conquered a territory, they did not tear down non-Muslim places of worship. Indeed these places of devotion are even preserved and protected. According to Shaikh of al-Azhar, destroying houses of worship is a serious crime since the consequences are so severe that they could threaten societal peace and harmony (*Dâr Al-Iftâ' Tusdir 'Adad Khâs Min Majallah "Insight" Bi Al-Injilîziyyah Radd 'Alâ Tafjîr "Dâ'Ish" Li Kanîsatay Tantâ Wa Al-Iskandariyyah*, 2017). In Indonesia, the government is responsible for protecting places of worship, as the nation is founded on a peaceful coexistence between diverse religious adherents. If the government is unable or, even worse, unwilling to fulfill this responsibility, it becomes the duty of every individual to protect the places of worship in order to uphold the objectives of the peace agreement (*Ma'zaq Ad-Dawlah Bayn Al-Islâmiyyîn Wa Al-'Ilmâniyyîn*, 2016, p. 98). The existence of numerous types of churches is a natural phenomenon brought on by Allah Swt (At-Tabarî, n.d. Volume 18, p. 645). This is in line with the word of Allah SWT; "If Allah had not opposed the aggression of certain people, the monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques where the name of Allah is frequently recited would have been destroyed". (QS. Al-Hajj; 40).

Constructing non-Muslim places of worship involves two aspects: building new places of worship or reconstructing those that have been destroyed. Permitting the construction of new places of worship for non-Muslims is essential, as protecting their freedom of faith ensures the opportunity to establish such places (Muhammad, 1973, p. 111). The construction of non-Muslim places of worship, according to schools of thought other than Hanafî, is only permissible when carried out by non-Muslims. However, the Hanafî school permits both Muslims and non-Muslims to construct such places of worship, as they view building structures, regardless of religious affiliation, as inherently permissible (Nizâm, 2002 Volume 4, p. 509). The Hanafis' viewpoint could possibly be applied as a reference in Indonesia, where many construction workers are Muslim. This demonstrates that differences among Muslim scholars are beneficial since they might provide a solution and a way out for Muslims. If non-Muslim houses of worship are destroyed or demolished by people in the name of Islam, the first step must be to reconstruct these houses of worship using Muslim power and funding. Reconstructing the destroyed place of worship is not intended to acknowledge the truth of another religion. But it is an attempt to rebuild shared humanity and social stability, as well as to mend the spirit and majesty of Islam, which

have been tarnished by the misconduct of irresponsible individuals. Such tolerance is most impactful when practiced collectively by the majority group toward minorities, as it reflects an awareness and shared commitment to fostering and sustaining harmony. By setting aside differences and refraining from leveraging numerical dominance, this majority-driven approach prioritizes unity and contributes to a more peaceful community (Hakim, 2021).

The variety of places of worship within a single area is, in essence, a symbol of harmony itself (Takdir & Sumbulah, 2024). The greatness of Islam should not be interpreted as an effort to eliminate the places of worship of other religions. The phrase "Islam ya'lu wa la yu'la alaih" encourages Muslims to strive for the advancement of their faith by improving society and actively promoting Islamic teachings (Al-Jad'ânî, 2022)

Countering Murder with Acts of Comprehensive Tolerance

Killing non-Muslims is absolutely banned and considered a horrible action. Religion should not be used to shed the blood of others. The Prophet SAW said: "Whoever murders a non-Muslim who lives peacefully will not be able to scent heaven for 40 years" (Al-Bukhârî, 2008, Verse 6913). This *hadith* has components of *mubalaghah* (A sense of exaggeration or hyperbole in literary expression) for the murderer of non-Muslim, that is the remark that they would be unable to smell heaven. This suggests that such activities are serious crimes and grave mistakes that can never be accepted in Islam (Al-'Asqalânî, n.d. Volume 12, p. 259). Non-Muslims in this context, are those who live peacefully and do not initiate war.

Meanwhile, in Islam, the proclamation of *jihad* applies only to non-Muslims who declare war, not those who choose peace (*ahl al-dhimmah* and *ahl al-'ahd*). Only the head of state has the authority to declare *jihad*, and no one else can. Therefore, anyone who engages in personal *jihad* on their own or on community initiative is pointless and worthless. Consequently, the culprit receives the utmost punishment rather than the reward of *jihad* (Al-Haramayn, 2003, p.

96).

Acts of extreme violence, such as bombing or murdering non-Muslims, are severe forms of intolerance that must be confronted through a comprehensive approach to tolerance. This means that tolerance should not be limited to one isolated act but should encompass various levels: from verbal support to practical assistance. For instance, rejecting non-Muslims can be countered by providing opportunities for them to contribute to society, while verbal bullying can be addressed through supportive dialogue. Similarly, physical violence or destruction of places of worship can be countered by direct action, such as helping to rebuild or protect those places. Tolerance, in this sense, involves active, multi-layered efforts that extend beyond passive acceptance, aiming to promote peace, coexistence, and respect for all.

While promoting tolerance, it is important to note that joining religious rituals or ceremonies of non-Muslims is not considered an act of tolerance in Islam. In fact, participating in such practices may be seen as approaching a point of abandoning the Islamic faith. Tolerance in Islam involves respecting others' beliefs and maintaining peaceful coexistence, but it does not extend to partaking in religious rites that contradict Islamic teachings. Engaging in these rituals could undermine a Muslim's own religious identity and commitment to the tenets of Islam. Prohibitions like these refer to the *hadith*: "Whoever resembles a group of people, then the individual involved belongs to it" (Al-Manâwî, 1972 Volume 3, p. 204). Tolerance requires some conditions, which Muslims must follow ('Umar, 2006, p. 110). Thus, Muslims should not elevate the issue of tolerance to the point of abandoning their own faith. Tolerance should only be limited to matters of *mu'amalah* (social dealings) between people of different beliefs. Such matters of *mu'amalah* should not take precedence over the relationship of *rububiyyah* (lordship) with Allah SWT. If this happens, one may be considered kind to non-Muslims but neglectful in their relationship with the Creator of the universe.

Contribution of Religious Tolerance in Communities

The framework for evaluating tolerance within religious communities aims to assess how different faiths align with the principles of religious moderation. This approach focuses on fostering peaceful coexistence and respect, encouraging individuals and groups to embrace inclusive values rather than divisiveness. Religious moderation is an effort to integrate religious beliefs into normal daily activities while abiding by the principles of peace, love, and mutual aid, rather than using aggression and arbitrary decisions (Azis & Anam, 2021, p. 26).

The concept of religious tolerance still faces challenges, particularly due to the unclear boundaries between tolerance and intolerance. The balance between religious tolerance and moderation has yet to be fully established. However, the ultimate goal of tolerance, with all its various criteria, remains the same: to foster peace (Shihab, 2022, p. 11). Simultaneously, some individuals and groups act in the name of Islam in ways that are indiscriminate and, at times, extreme, causing harm to followers of other faiths. This issue requires immediate attention by raising awareness and understanding of the importance of religious tolerance and moderation to foster religious peace.

The framework of tolerance outlined above operates in a reciprocal manner. This means that as intolerance rises, so too does the need for tolerance. For example, when verbal bullying such as sarcasm or insults occurs, tolerance can be expressed by offering verbal support. If intolerance manifests as interference with or oppression of the religious practices of others, tolerance would involve actively supporting and protecting these activities. When places of worship are destroyed or individuals from other religions are harmed, tolerance requires more than just words—it necessitates actions like helping to rebuild damaged places of worship and providing care for the injured, both physically and mentally. This approach is essential to reestablish the true course of tolerance, ensuring that Islam is recognized as a religion of peace and harmony.

Preserving the good fame of religion against threats is a public responsibility (Al-Mâwardî, 1985, p. 150). Everyone shouldn't remain quiet if the good fame of religion is disregarded. If there are individuals who erode the dignity of Islam, every Muslim must work to restore Islam's respectability. Because if Islam is tainted by separatist groups, the bad influence would spread to other Muslims. Aside from that, preserving social stability in order to foster an ideal environment is a shared responsibility. A single person cannot stand idly by and completely entrust such duties to the authorities. Because immorality has to be removed (Al-Mâwardî, 1985, p. 164). Therefore, it is essential to uphold the aforementioned principles of tolerance and actively counteract intolerant behaviors. Failing to do so poses a significant risk of societal instability.

The guidance provided in this article emphasizes balancing tolerance through proactive measures to foster interfaith harmony. Acts of intolerance that undermine the noble values of diversity must be addressed with tangible and constructive actions. Islam teaches its followers that only its faith is true. However, Islam does not teach hostility toward followers of other religions. Islam still provides space for freedom, as differences are part of human nature that must be acknowledged to prevent hostility (Helmy et al., 2021). Therefore, when acts of intolerance occur, they should be resolved through constructive dialogue and mutual understanding, avoiding any retaliatory measures that could aggravate the situation (Jati et al., 2022). To achieve this, one crucial element is the synergy among all parties—religious leaders, the government, educators, and society, with their diverse backgrounds, united in the pursuit of peace and solidarity. Tolerance is a shared responsibility that cannot be realized by individuals alone. Its benefits will be broader and more impactful when practiced as a collective effort (Ar et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Tolerance should actively counter intolerant actions through corresponding acts of

compassion and solidarity. When non-Muslims are rejected in certain contexts, opportunities must be created for them to contribute positively. Verbal bullying, such as insults or sarcasm, should be met with verbal support and encouragement. Physical aggression or action-based bullying must be addressed by offering direct protective actions and aid. Destruction of religious buildings should be countered by tangible support to rebuild those structure. Lastly, extreme acts of intolerance, such as bombing non-Muslims or committing murder, must be countered by a comprehensive response involving all levels of tolerance. However, it is crucial to recognize that participating in the ritual ceremonies of other religions in response to such violence does not represent tolerance. In fact, it may be seen as abandoning Islam, as it involves adopting practices that contradict Islamic principles. This highlights the need to counter intolerant actions with proactive, multi-level tolerance, promoting peace, understanding, and preserving religious integrity. All of this is about actively contributing to peaceful coexistence, not just tolerating differences in a neutral or indifferent manner.

This framework is designed to respond effectively when acts of intolerance occur, aiming to elevate tolerance where its most needed. The application of tolerance parameters is highly dependent on the specific dynamics of religious moderation in a given region. In areas where intolerance is pervasive, it is crucial to introduce corresponding levels of tolerance to counteract it. On the other hand, in places where tolerance is already ingrained, blending of religious practices must be avoided. Consequently, the approach to tolerance must be flexible or adaptable to context. To assess both tolerant and intolerant actions, a hierarchy of responses is established to guide community evaluations. This study seeks to redefine tolerance, making it more relevant to the practical realities of pluralistic societies and offering solutions tailored to local issues.

Acknowledgement

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