



## The Qur'anic Vision Towards Minorities in a Plural Society: A Case Study in Kudus Regency, Indonesia

Abdul Fatah,<sup>1\*</sup> Imam Sadili,<sup>2</sup> Arif Friyadi,<sup>3</sup> Aufa Abdillah<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Qur'anic Studies, Ushuluddin Faculty, IAIN Kudus, Indonesia; <sup>2</sup> Islamic Communication and Broadcasting, Ushuluddin and Dakwah Faculty, IAIN Madura, Indonesia; <sup>3</sup> Hadist Studies, Ushuluddin Faculty, IAIN Kudus, Indonesia; <sup>4</sup> Psychology, Dakwah Faculty, UIN Salatiga, Indonesia.

**Abstract:** This paper explores the Qura'nic vision of fostering harmony for minorities in a pluralistic society, using Karangrowo village in Kudus City, Indonesia, as a case study. Karangrowo, Kudus is a village with a long history of religious diversity and coexistence, where Muslims, Christians, and *samin* (local native faith) live together peacefully. The qualitative research method employed in this study involves collecting data related to the theme and conducting interviews with key informants considered to have expertise in the relevant topic. The paper analyzes the Qura'nic verses that promote tolerance, respect, dialogue, and cooperation among religious groups and how they are implemented in Kudus regency people's social and cultural practices. The paper also examines the challenges and opportunities for enhancing the Qura'nic vision of minority protection in the context of contemporary Indonesia, which faces various issues such as radicalism, extremism, and intolerance. The Qura'nic values of minorities are relevant and essential for creating harmony for minorities in a pluralistic society. Kudus can serve as a model and inspiration for other regions in Indonesia to create harmony and develop an inclusive society.

**Keywords:** qur'anic vision, minorities, plural society, tolerance

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\*Corresponding Author: Abdul Fatah (abdulfatah@iainkudus.ac.id), Qur'anic Studies, Ushuluddin Faculty, IAIN Kudus, Indonesia, Jl. Gondangmanis No. 51, Ngembalrejo, Bae, Kudus, Central Java 59322, Indonesia.

## A. Introduction

Indonesia is a rich country in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, and even religion. This pluralism can be an asset to preserve diversity. Still, on the other hand, the diversity of such differences is also susceptible to conflict and disintegration, primarily if classified as a majority-minority group, whether in the context of a religious, tribal, cultural, or other form of categorization (Wolff, 2020).

Among the minority issues is the matter of religions that are not regarded officially as recognized religions in Indonesia. For instance, a resident from Cirebon, West Java, may be forced to fill in the religion column in the resident identity card with Islam, even though He is a follower of Judaism. It is done solely to ensure security and public services. What he did is essentially deceiving himself due to government policies that have yet to accommodate beliefs outside the officially recognized religions: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Similarly, a follower of Sikhism in Jakarta may be compelled to write Hindu as his religion on his resident identity card. The Sikh follower chooses Hindu due to shared cultural factors, both of which originate from India. However, what he did involved internal conflict, as he stated something untrue to his beliefs (BBC News, 2023).

In the records of the Setara Institute, a non-governmental organization focused on research and advocacy in the fields of democracy, political freedom, and human rights, it is revealed that persecution against minorities in Indonesia occurs in various forms. One of the most frequent occurrences is the disturbance of places of worship. This disturbance encompasses the rejection of the construction of places of worship, disruptions during the construction of places of worship, sealing of places of worship, disturbances during worship at places of worship, destruction of places of worship, and attacks on individuals that take place at places of worship carried out by non-state and state actors. In 2022, Setara Institute recorded the highest number of disturbances at mosques, totaling 15 incidents, followed by churches with 13 incidents. However, it is essential to emphasize that a significant number of mosques facing disturbances are Ahmadiyya mosques and other mosques considered 'different' from mainstream Muslim groups (Institute, 2022).

The above cases illustrate how minority groups continue to be a challenge for Indonesia, highlighting that discrimination against minorities does not align with the constitutional mandate in the 1945 Constitution, Article 29, which stipulates that the state guarantees the freedom of every citizen to embrace their religion and worship following their beliefs. In response to this reality, according to a study by Noor Haidi

Hasan, Indonesia still faces challenges in managing diversity and providing protection for minority groups. Despite a decrease in the threats of radicalism and terrorism, Indonesia is not immune to the possibility of religious conflicts erupting. Demonstrations opposing minority religious groups organized by conservative and hardline Muslim groups have repeatedly occurred (Hasan, 2017). It is a significant challenge for the nation to ensure that majority-minority relations can coexist and synergize to nurture Indonesia's unity and integrity collectively.

The findings from Mahdia Asyad's study in Pakistan, where inter-religious violence occurs between the majority and minority, reveal that Islam, as the majority religion, often conflicts with non-Muslim communities such as Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist minorities. Inter-religious violence includes attacks based on false accusations against non-Muslim minority members accused of insulting Islam. Violence not only occurs between religions but also within one religious group, as sectarian violence occurs among different sects of Islam, namely Sunni, Shia, and Ahmadi (Arshad, 2023).

The pattern of majority-minority conflict in Pakistan bears similarities to what occurs in India. Research findings by Stephen M. Croucher indicate that Hindus, as the majority group in India, tend to dominate in conflict situations because they have more security within their ethnic group compared to Muslims as the minority group (Croucher et al., 2011). Hindus are a culturally, politically, economically, and religiously dominant group in India, making them more inclined to feel comfortable dominating in conflict situations. Their dominant status, demographics, and institutional support make Hindus a solid religious group. If a similar study were conducted in Pakistan, the dominant group would likely be Muslims, and the same could be the case in Indonesia (Croucher et al., 2011).

In the academic domain, Harvard University, as one of the world-renowned campuses, also faces similar challenges. The elected rector, who is from the black community (a minority group) Gay, has faced tremendous pressure to resign from her position, with accusations of anti-Semitism and allegations of plagiarism (mediaindonesia.com, 2024). The academic realm, which ideally should uphold academic integrity, apparently also faces difficulties in being fair and objective.

The findings above indicate that majority-minority relations become a sensitive issue in social relationships. If the plurality of society is not managed well, it can lead to conflict, violence, and even criminal acts. In Indonesia, one city considered successful in managing diversity and not abusing the name of religion in every political activity and public service is Singkawang City in West Kalimantan. It

ensures all communities receive equal and non-discriminatory services (Sahide et al., 2022). Ahmad Sahide is also in line with the release from the Setara Institute, where Singkawang, followed by Salatiga, is recognized as a city with a high tolerance level (Institute, 2023).

Islam, as the majority religion in Indonesia, has a moral obligation to be a pioneer of tolerance and advocate for actions to safeguard the rights of minority and marginalized groups within the government, society, politics, economy, education, and other spheres. It ensures no discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, or skin color differences. The mission of the Qur'an for equality and respect for the rights of minorities becomes essential to be explored academically. It becomes a guide for Muslims to protect the rights of minority and marginalized groups. Misunderstandings of the Qur'an and *hadith* sometimes trigger the spirit of intolerance towards those who are different, especially non-Muslims. Textual and black-and-white understanding is suspected to contribute to the production of intolerant interpretations that lead to conflicts (Arifin et al., 2023). Therefore, the urgency of this paper is to present the sensitive teachings of the Qur'an that protect minority groups and preserve diversity to maintain the unity and harmony of Indonesia.

## **B. Methods**

The research method employed in this study is qualitative. It involves collecting data related to the theme and conducting interviews with key informants with expertise in the relevant topic (Creswell, 2014). The research location is Karangrowo Village, Undaan, Kudus, Central Java. This village was chosen because it is considered successful in managing a plural society with three different religions that can live peacefully: Islam, Christianity, and *Samin* (a local indigenous faith).

The data is collected from documentation and interviews with key informants in Karangrowo village, Kudus Regency, Indonesia, such as Heri Darwanto (the head of Karangrowo village), Muhammadun Toha (the Islamic public figure), Stefanus Suwarni (Pastor), and Mbah Niti and Maskat (the *Samin* community leaders). The interviews with the informants were conducted in September 2022. In addition to conducting interviews, the researchers observed the interactions, behaviors, and activities of the society in Karangrowo Village. The researchers even participated in a seminar on religious moderation held at the Karangrowo Village Hall, which involved society leaders, religious figures, and youth from the village.

## C. Results and Discussion

### Majority-Minority Group Relation in Kudus, Central Java

Indonesia consists of various ethnicities, languages, and religions. As for the religions in Indonesia, they are diverse. The constitution of 1945 explicitly guarantees freedom of religion, as stated in Article 29, Paragraph 2. However, the government officially recognizes only six religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Meanwhile, followers of traditional religions or other faiths receive limited recognition as 'native-faith followers' (*penghayat kepercayaan*) (Marshall, 2018). Islam is the majority religion in Indonesia, with 238.09 million people (approximately 86.93%): the Christians, 20.45 million or 7.47%, Catholics, 8.43 million or 3.08 %, 4.67 million, or 1.71%, Hinduism, and 2.03 million, or 0.74%, Buddhism, Confucianism 73.63 thousand or 0.03%, and local adherents 126.51 thousand, or 0.05% (Kusnandar, 2021).

The description above indicates that Indonesia is a country with a high level of diversity. Nurturing this complex diversity is undoubtedly challenging in maintaining peaceful and respectful relationships. The diversity of society, whether we like it or not, gives rise to majority-minority groups, and sometimes, this categorization triggers an imbalance in social relationships. The relationship between the majority and minority often faces significant challenges in achieving peace, partly due to fears or concerns from the majority group whose position may be shifted by the minority.

Nainggolan states that intolerance, among its triggers, is the presence of fear and anxiety. Daniel exemplifies in the case of rejecting the construction of a church in Bantul, Yogyakarta, that the intolerant attitude of the group opposing the church is triggered by fear of the Gospel Mission (Daniel M. Nainggolan, 2023). On the other hand, Kandath evaluates that the politicization of ethnic identity more often causes conflicts between majority and minority groups. Therefore, understanding the characteristics of both groups will pave the way for peaceful collaboration (Kandath, 2006).

Kudus is one of the regions in Indonesia that has been successful in building harmony between majority and minority groups while simultaneously respecting the traditions of the past, ensuring they remain rooted in their origins. The portrait of religious harmony in Kudus is due mainly to the exemplary conduct set by Sunan Kudus, also known as Raden Jakfar Shadiq. The method of preaching practiced by the *Walisongo* (Nine Saints, nine Muslim saints of Java who played a crucial role in

spreading Islam in Java, Indonesia), including Sunan Kudus, generally implements the teachings of the Quran found in Surah An-Nahl/16:125.

“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in the best way. Indeed, your Lord knows most who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowledgeable of who is [rightly] guided.”

The phrase "wisdom" became the main principle that Sunan Kudus held onto while preaching in the Kudus city. As part of implementing this wisdom, Raden Jakfar Shadiq (Sunan Kudus alias) often utilized the pathways of art and culture, along with applied technology that was practical and needed by the community (Sunyoto, 2017). Examples include the Kudus Mosque Tower and the Twin Gates of the Kudus Mosque, which reflect a compromise between Islamic and local architecture with Hindu characteristics. The harmonious blend of these two types of structures demonstrates Jakfar Shadiq's flexibility and wisdom.

Similarly, he forbade the community from slaughtering and consuming beef, an animal revered and honored by Hindus. It is even said that during Eid al-Adha, Sunan Kudus did not slaughter a cow but a buffalo instead (Sunyoto, 2017). This teaching is a part of Sunan Kudus's tolerance and respect for people of different religions or beliefs. What Sunan Kudus did teaches the value of wisdom, where the majority can protect and support the minority, and in turn, the minority respects the majority. By understanding and appreciating one another, social life with diverse backgrounds will not hinder living peacefully, safely, and harmoniously.

The ability to engage in dialogue between Islamic teachings and existing local cultural values is part of presenting Islam as a blessing for all creation (*rahmatan lil alamin*). The universal values of Islam permeate all aspects of human life. The presence of Islam in the lives of Muslims, both individually and socially, is capable of shaping a culture that is not monolithic. The Muslim communities in different regions do not always share the same culture. Islam provides ample space for the development of culture in each region, as long as it does not contradict or violate its universal principles (Sulthon, 2000). It is also what Sunan Kudus taught, starting with the Kudus Tower, which combines Islamic and Hindu architectural values. In his sermons, Sunan Kudus often quoted verses from the Quran, especially from *Surah Al-Baqarah*, which means "the cow." He asked the Muslim community not to slaughter or eat beef. This request surprised the residents, especially the Hindu community, and made them admire Sunan Kudus. He gained the community's sympathy by respecting their beliefs (Damayanti & Sartini, 2023). The tradition of not slaughtering cows during Eid al-Adha and replacing them with buffaloes has been upheld by the people of Kudus for generations. It continues to this day

(Seasia.co, 2023). Buffalo meat has also become one of the culinary icons of Kudus, with "*soto kerbau*" (buffalo soup) being a famous dish in the city. What Sunan Kudus formulated by prohibiting his followers from slaughtering cows is an extraordinary form of tolerance aimed at maintaining harmony and peace. The adaptive cultural values implemented by Sunan Kudus can serve as an inspiration and reference for building a pluralistic nation where people can safeguard, respect, and appreciate differences.

According to Jonas Yunus Atlas, compassion is a central concept in Islam, and this concept can serve as a bridge to build mutual understanding among various religions. However, if this bridge remains at the level of 'understanding,' it will not be sufficient. Efforts are needed to delve deeper to actualize the value of compassion to foster understanding among adherents of different religions (Atlas, 2015). What Sunan Kudus did, with his high level of tolerance towards Hindus at that time in the city of Kudus, can be interpreted as an act of compassion between the majority and minority groups, thereby effectively preventing conflict and violence. Learning from the example set by Sunan Kudus, ideally, Muslim, as the majority group, has a moral responsibility to embrace non-Muslim groups to work hand in hand in preserving the unity of Indonesian society

### **The Charter of Medina and the Protection of Minorities**

The Charter of Medina is the first written legal agreement signed by various communities in the history of humanity. Evidence shows that the charter is not only a theoretical framework but was also implemented by all layers of the pluralistic society in Medina. The binding nature of the charter on all segments of Medina's society contributed to the growth of diversity and pluralism, opening the doors for different religions to coexist peacefully (Baidhawiy, 2015).

The Charter of Medina is an agreement with its inhabitants, including the Jewish community. No debate from classical or modern scholars refutes the existence of the agreement made by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) with the Medina community, later known as the Charter of Medina. (Anjum, n.d.) According to Yetkin, the Charter of Medina is the first written constitution in Islam related to the documented state law. This charter is an inspiration and reference for establishing a conflict resolution method in society to create harmony and coexistence in a pluralistic community. It regulates the rights and duties of citizens of Medina, both Muslims and non-Muslims (Yildirim, 2009). The *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) carried out by Prophet Muhammad to establish peaceful and harmonious relationships in Medina, encompassing the entire diversity of its society, serves as a

role model that remains highly relevant for application in Indonesia. Moreover, Indonesia has a high ethnicity, language, and religious diversity.

According to Andrew March, the establishment of Medina provides an authoritative example for Muslims to establish a pluralistic political order, with citizenship (rather than religion) as the fundamental principle for rights and responsibilities (March, 2019). Andrew March's opinion emphasizes that the Prophet taught the principle of equal rights based on citizenship without considering one's religion, ethnicity, or skin color; everyone had equal rights and responsibilities under the broad umbrella of the city of Medina.

According to Ali Bulac, through the Medina Charter, Prophet Muhammad gathered conflicting groups, discussed their will and needs, and formulated a plan acceptable to all parties involved, thus ending long-standing disputes among them. The written agreement of the Medina community in this constitution allowed everyone to accept each other as a natural fact without imposing domination, legalization of their respective ways of life and thinking, and protection under the agreed-upon law. This constitution was not based on the domination of one group but on the participation of all involved groups. Muslims were free to live according to the guidance and commands of their religion, and the same rights applied to Jews and others (Bulac, 1998).

Some of the content from the Medina Charter Ibn Hisham recorded can inspire Muslims to coexist in society and state with different groups while protecting their rights, especially those of minorities. One such example is:

Article 16

“Verily, the Jews who follow us have the right to assistance and support as long as the believers are not wronged or opposed by them.” (Hisyam, 1955)

The above article shows that anyone who agrees to the Medina Charter, including the Jews, has the right to assistance and support. It means equal rights for all citizens of Medina who are bound by the charter, regardless of their religious or ethnic identity.

Article 25

“The Jews of the Bani' Awf are one community with the believers. For the Jews, their religion, and for the Muslims, their religion. Also, (this freedom applies) to their allies and themselves, except for those who do wrong and commit crimes. Such actions harm themselves and their families” (Hisyam, 1955)

Article 25 emphasizes freedom of religion in Medina, where they are bound by the large house referred to as one community. This religious freedom applies not only to Jews and Muslims but also to all their allies.

#### Article 37

“For the Jews, there is a financial obligation, and for the Muslims, there is a financial obligation. They (Jews and Muslims) mutually assist each other in facing their enemies, according to this charter. They provide advice and counsel to each other. They fulfill promises and do not betray their opponents. No one bears the consequences of their ally's mistakes. Defense is provided to the oppressed party” (Hisyam, 1955)

The above article also indicates the same obligation for both Jews and Muslims to bear the expenses required in warfare or defense jointly. Likewise, everyone has the right to provide advice and counsel to maintain Medina's integrity.

#### Article 46

“The Jews of Al-'Awas, their allies, and themselves have rights and obligations like other groups supporting this charter, with excellent and full treatment from all supporters of this charter. Indeed, goodness (loyalty) is different from evil (betrayal). Every person is responsible for their actions. Indeed, Allah approves and views the contents of this charter favorably.” (Hisyam, 1955)

Article 46 emphasizes equality of rights and obligations and equal opportunities for fair treatment. The examples of articles above confirm how the Constitution of Medina creates spaces for agreements between communities to collectively build Medina with equal rights and obligations without any distinctions. Freedom of religion is guaranteed, financial responsibilities are shared, and the right to assistance and support applies to all residents of Medina.

The spirit of the Constitution of Medina ideally inspires Muslims to nurture diversity and emphasize equal rights and obligations on behalf of citizens. Moreover, in the context of Indonesia, Muslims constitute the majority group with significant influence, especially in social and community contexts. Discrimination against minority groups is not in line with the teachings and spirit conveyed by the Prophet. The Constitution of Medina serves as tangible evidence of how the Prophet embraced all elements of society to build Medina and foster harmony in the community collectively.

### **The Qur'anic Vision on Pluralism and Minority Rights**

The Qur'an, as a guide for humanity, particularly for the Muslim community (Al-Baqarah/2:185), serves as a reference in navigating life in this world, including

interactions with various diverse groups of people. What is the Qur'an's perspective on societal pluralism, and how should Muslims behave and act in light of the reality of societal diversity, especially concerning minority and marginalized groups? The Qur'an's vision regarding diversity and the protection of minority rights is outlined as follows:

1. The principle of tolerance in diversity: According to Zuly Qodir, the Qur'an's perspective on multiculturalism/pluralism can be observed in Al-Hujurat/49:13.

“Humanity, indeed, We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another.” [Al-Hujurat/49:13]

The verse indicates that the diversity among human beings, with all their backgrounds, is inviolable or given. Cultural diversity is the will of the Almighty and All-Knowing God over everything. So, why do human beings often attempt to negate the diversity that God has ordained? (Zuly Qodir, 2015). According to the perspective of Hilal Wani et al., Islam teaches the principle of respect, emphasizing that Muslims should honor every ideology, culture, community, and religion. The purpose of diversity is mutual recognition and understanding of one another (*li ta'arafu*). God did not create humanity as a single community because He intends to test people, and everyone will be held accountable to Him on the Day of Judgment (Wani et al., 2015). Therefore, the diversity of society, with its various ethnicities, languages, and religions, is inevitable. This diversity is given by Allah the Almighty, and humans are commanded to face this pluralism with *li ta'arafu*, which is mutual recognition and understanding. In a broader context, the command to know one another in Al-Hujurat/49:13 implies learning and interacting with a spirit of cooperation and brotherhood. Thus, in the name of human brotherhood, harmony will prevail as people understand each other.

2. The principle of justice and equality: The Qur'an also emphasizes the principles of justice and equality, as stated in An-Nahl/16:90 and Al-Imran/3:195.

“Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct, gives to relatives, and forbids immorality, lousy conduct, and oppression. He admonishes that you may be reminded.” [An Nahl/16:90]

In his commentary, Quraish Shihab explains that a just person walks straight and always uses the same standard, not a double standard. It is this equality that makes a just person impartial in disputes. Furthermore, the Qur'an asserts that humans should act justly, even if it is against their own family, parents, or themselves (Quran, An-Nisa/4:135), and even towards their enemies (Quran, Al-Maidah/5:8).

As for "*ihsan*," it has two meanings: bestowing blessings upon others and performing good deeds. Therefore, the term "*ihsan*" has a broader and richer meaning compared to justice because justice involves treating others the same as oneself. In contrast, *ihsan* (good conduct) entails treating them better than oneself. Justice is about taking or giving all rights due to others, while *ihsan* provides more than required. *Ihsan* represents the pinnacle of virtuous actions, making the command to practice *ihsan* an instruction to engage in all positive activities (M. Quraish Shihab, 2000). In a broader context, the command of justice and *ihsan* applies universally, requiring Muslims to exhibit fairness towards anyone, including those who are different or belong to minority or marginalized groups. Moreover, Muslims are encouraged to practice *ihsan*, which represents the pinnacle of goodness for the entire universe. It emphasizes these universal and inclusive principles, promoting justice, equity, and benevolence towards all, irrespective of differences or minorities.

"And their Lord responded to them, "Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another." [Al' Imran/4:195]

For Rasyid Ridha, this verse shows how Islam establishes an equal status between men and women. The verse elevates Muslim women's dignity in Muslim men's presence. Most societies before Islam had degraded the rights of women, treating them as if they were controlled for the benefit and desires of men. Some religious teachings had granted superiority to men solely based on their gender, while women were considered inferior. Additionally, some people deemed women unfit to bear religious responsibilities. This verse reinforces the teachings of Islam regarding equality and equivalence, affirming that the Quran recognizes the dignity of women and their equality with men (Ridha, 1990). It explicitly addresses gender equality between men and women. However, in the context of societal pluralism, the social status within a country should be parallel, both in rights and responsibilities, without discrimination. If group A could participate in political events, the same should apply to group B, and so forth.

3. The principle of religious freedom: The Qur'an also recognizes religious freedom in Al-Baqarah/2:256, explicitly stating that religion has no compulsion. It demonstrates the Quranic vision of human freedom to choose their beliefs.

"There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become apparent from the wrong." [Al Baqarah/2:256]

Al-Maraghi, in his commentary, explains that the meaning of the verse "(لا إكراهَ) (في الدين)" is that there is no compulsion in religion. It is a foundational and crucial

principle in Islamic teachings. It is not permissible to force someone to embrace Islam, just as it is not allowed to exert pressure to leave Islam. Allah SWT commands us to invite people to His path with wisdom, good advice, and engaging in debates with those who disagree in the best manner, all while preserving the freedom of preaching and protecting oneself from temptation or discord (al-Maraghi, 1946a). The verse reinforces that Islam is an open and dialogical religion, where there should be no compulsion in any matter, including matters of faith. As a majority group in a societal structure, it is imperative not to impose its will in the name of the majority and overlook the voices of minorities.

4. The principle of trustworthiness: The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of upholding trust, as mentioned in Surah An-Nisa/4:58. The concept of trustworthiness includes safeguarding the rights of minorities.

“Indeed, Allah commands you to render trust to whom they are due and, when you judge between people, to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing.” [An Nisa/4:58]

As defined by al-Maraghi, *Amanah* is safeguarded to be delivered to its owner. The person entrusted with and delivering the trust should do so with vigilance, honesty, and loyalty (al-Maraghi, 1946b). Furthermore, al-Maraghi interprets the verse by stating that among the meanings of *amanah* is a person's trustworthiness towards fellow human beings, encompassing various aspects such as returning entrusted items to their owners, refraining from dishonesty, preserving secrets, and similar responsibilities. This duty extends to family, relatives, the general public, and the government. It also includes the fairness of leaders towards the people, the justice of scholars towards the general public by providing guidance in beliefs and beneficial actions in worldly and afterlife matters, and advice and laws that strengthen faith and protect against wrongdoing. It encourages people to do good and act virtuously (al-Maraghi, 1946b). *Amanah* means that part of being trustworthy includes the justice of leaders towards their people. Therefore, there should be no discrimination against the citizens; everyone must have equal rights and responsibilities without differentiation based on religion, ethnicity, or skin color.

5. The principle of humanity and compassion: The Qur'an asserts that Prophet Muhammad was sent as a mercy to all creation (Al-Anbiya/21:107). It indicates that the values of Islamic teachings are universally applicable to humanity and all people.

“And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.” [Al Anbiya/21:107]

Imam al-Thabari believes that scholars of interpretation (*mufasssirun*) differ in interpreting the meaning of this verse. The question revolves around whether "all of creation" in this context refers to all humanity, believers, and non-believers, or specifically to those who believe, excluding non-believers. Some argue that it relates to all humanity, encompassing believers and non-believers (al-Tabari, 2000). It affirms that the values of Islamic teachings are universal for the entire universe, without distinguishing between Muslims and non-Muslims.

A summary of the Quran's vision of societal pluralism can be outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*The Qur'an principles and explanation*

No.	The principles of the Qur'an	Explanation
1.	The principle of tolerance in diversity (Al-Hujurat/49:13).	The diversity of society is an inevitability, and the way to approach it is through <i>li ta'arafu</i> , learning about each other and interacting in the spirit of cooperation and brotherhood
2.	The principle of justice and equality (An-Nahl/16:90 and Al-Imran/3:195).	A Muslim's conduct should reflect justice in interactions with everyone, even encouraged to exhibit <i>ihsan</i> (excellence). Granting equal rights and responsibilities to society, both Muslim and non-Muslim, is part of the spirit of Surah An-Nahl/16:90 and Al-Imran/3:195
3.	The principle of religious freedom (Al-Baqarah/2:256).	The Qur'an grants freedom of religion and prohibits the imposition of faith. In the societal context, forcing the will of the majority and disregarding the voice of minorities clearly contradicts the spirit of freedom in Surah Al-Baqarah/2:256.
4.	The principle of trustworthiness (An-Nisa/4:58).	Part of being trustworthy involves the just treatment of leaders towards their people. There should be no discrimination against citizens; everyone must have equal rights and responsibilities without differentiation based on religion, ethnicity, or skin color.

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5.	The principle of humanity and compassion (Al-Anbiya/21:107).	The values of Islamic teachings are for the entire universe without distinguishing religious identities and others.
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Source: researcher's analysis (2024)

### **The Practice of Harmony in the Pluralistic Society of Kudus, Indonesia**

Indonesia, as a country with high social diversity, often faces conflicts, particularly involving minority groups. However, several areas in Indonesia still have successfully managed this diversity, resulting in harmony and peace among communities. One notable example is Karangrowo Village in the Undaan District of Kudus Regency, Central Java Province. This village is pluralistic, with three religions coexisting peacefully: Islam, Christianity, and *Samin* (local native faith). The head of Karangrowo Village, Heri Darwanto, stated,

"The community of Karangrowo Village is a small example of a pluralistic community that can coexist harmoniously. There is no discrimination between the majority and minority; everyone is equal, with the same rights and responsibilities." (H. Darwanto, personal communication, September 15, 2022)

Furthermore, the Village Head, who has been in office for two terms, provides an example of the practice of harmony in Karangrowo—tolerance in Karangrowo, Undaan, Kudus, Central Java, described below.

#### 1. Respecting Different Beliefs

Respecting others' religions can be observed during major religious celebrations. When Muslims celebrate Eid al-Fitr, Christian and *Sedulur Sikep* communities (local native faith followers) enjoy visiting each other's homes and offering traditional cookies in the living room to honor the visiting Muslims. During the celebration of the Ascension of Jesus Christ, Christians invite Muslims and *Sedulur Sikep* to participate in the commemorative feast in the churchyard. In this context, Muslims and *Sedulur Sikep* only participate in the outdoor festivities, not the whole church worship procession, and this is a shared understanding supported by the church congregation by providing halal food and drinks. The community in Karangrowo also respects different religious choices, such as when a *Sedulur Sikep* follower converts to Islam (muslim) and marries a Muslim woman. Even though they live with a family who adheres to the *Sikep* belief, family ties remain harmonious despite different beliefs. The extended families on both sides also maintain familial harmony despite differing beliefs.

## 2. Freedom to Practice Religious Activities:

Religious activities often intersect with the interests of followers of other religions. For example, when it's time for prayer, the call to prayer (*adzan*) is broadcast five times a day through loudspeakers from the mosque. The Christian and *Samin* communities understand and tolerate this. Similarly, during the Christmas celebration, where church hymns are sung until midnight, followers of other religions understand and tolerate this. When students from the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Kudus visit the house of a *Sedulur Sikep* elder, and the call to prayer (*adzan*) is heard, the *Sedulur Sikep* promptly ends the conversation and allows the IAIN Kudus team to perform their prayers. These activities have proven that followers of different religions—Muslims, Christians, and *Sedulur Sikep* in Karangrowo Village—grant freedom to followers of other faiths to worship and carry out their religious activities peacefully without any conflicts.

## 3. Mutual Assistance Among Religious Communities:

The people of Karangrowo Village consistently help one another, setting aside personal egos despite differing beliefs. Mutual assistance is a regular practice in Karangrowo Village, seen in community service to clean the village, collective efforts in building houses (*sambatan* tradition), drying rice traditions, and traditions related to family events such as weddings and circumcision ceremonies. They help each other not only with physical efforts but also with material contributions. Their assistance is sincere, without considering the person's religious background (H. Darwanto, personal communication, September 15, 2022).

The harmony that occurs in the community of Karangrowo is primarily due to the role of religious leaders who successfully translate the values of religious teachings into a social context. Religious leaders in Karangrowo are crucial in explaining religious teachings or beliefs, as their followers easily understand and practice more down-to-earth concepts. Islamic religious leaders emphasize the universal values of Islam, such as *rahmah* (compassion) and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood). Christian religious leaders emphasize the love of Jesus that should be spread to all people regardless of their religious differences. Meanwhile, *Sedulur Sikep* teachers emphasize a way of life that is *seger waras* (healthy), *guyub rukun* (harmonious unity), and *nglakoni apik sak rinane sak wengine* (doing good for oneself and others). Based on the explanations provided by these religious and belief leaders, the community implements these concepts in their daily behaviors during religious and social activities.

The roles of these religious figures in conveying the values of religious teachings to the community are depicted as follows—for instance, Islamic figure KH.

Muhammadun Toha teaches the Muslim community in Karangrowo that Islam envisions *rahmatan lil alamin*, being a mercy to the entire universe. The value of mercy must be practiced through good and respectful behavior towards everyone, especially the people of Karangrowo. Additionally, as the minority group in the village, Muslims are not allowed to behave arbitrarily, let alone oppress other religions, because Islam is a tolerant religion that advocates brotherhood, mutual assistance, and love for one another. (Muhammadun Toha, personal communication, September 25, 2022) The Muslims in Karangrowo are taught about the principles of brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), *Ukhuwah Islamiyah*, *Wataniyah*, and *Insaniyah*. *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* fosters brotherhood based on a shared faith, the common bond of Islamic beliefs among fellow Muslims. *Ukhuwah Insaniyah* encompasses brotherhood among all human beings, irrespective of differences in race, religion, ethnicity, and culture, transcending geographical and national boundaries. *Ukhuwah Wataniyah* represents brotherhood bound by nationalism or a shared national identity within one country or homeland.

"Treating our brothers and sisters of different religions with kindness means practicing *Ukhuwah Insaniyah* and *Ukhuwah Wataniyah*." (Muhammadun Toha, personal communication, September 25, 2022)

The Christian religious leader in Karangrowo is Pastor Stefanus Suwarni. He imparts the value of compassion among fellow human beings to the Christian congregation in the village. In his perspective, all religions teach goodness and compassion among people because their goal is to foster harmony in society. As a follower of Christ, he believes that societal differences have always existed and it is impossible to eliminate them, including the diversity of religions. He emphasizes to his followers the importance of living in peace and loving one another, whether among fellow Christians or those of different faiths. Pastor Suwarni quotes from the Bible, stating, 'Love one another as I have loved you, love your neighbor and all people as yourself, and love your enemies.' The value of love taught in Christian teachings serves as a guide for Christians in their social interactions. There is no reason to harbor hostility or hatred between individuals based on differences in religion or beliefs.

"We are all in the same household, meaning one nation. Therefore, as citizens who love this homeland, we should always live in harmony and peace, even with different religions and beliefs." (S. Suwarni, personal communication, September 16, 2022)

One of the religious leaders of the *Samin* community is Mbah Niti. According to Mbah Niti, the core teachings of this local belief system involve respecting others and

avoiding causing harm to others. In addition to these values, the religion also emphasizes the principle of harmony in society, steering clear of immoral attitudes such as *drengki* (having bad intentions), *srei* (greed), *panesten* (easily offended), *dahwen* (slandering/accusing without evidence), and *kemeren* (disliking seeing others have something). The teachings of the *Samin* religion are not formally taught but are passed down informally at home, primarily by parents and through generations (Niti, personal communication, September 23, 2022). Mbah Maskat, as a younger teacher of the Sedulur Sikep belief system, believes that the fundamental principle of life is to realize harmony, namely *seger waras* (healthy and peaceful living), which is an essential part of life and a basic need that cannot be negotiated or exchanged for other material possessions. *Guyub rukun* (living in harmony) is a social need for everyone to achieve happiness for oneself and the community. Those unable to attain harmony will certainly not be happy. *Nglakoni becik apik sak rinane sak wengine* (doing good day and night) means that followers of the Sedulur Sikep belief system must always engage in virtuous acts at any time and anywhere. Even in the face of disagreements or hostility, they should prioritize their *semeleh* attitude. *Semeleh* itself means not wanting to resist verbal disputes or physical confrontations. They allow themselves to be hated, insulted, stolen from, or deceived. They believe their silent stance will offer hope for those who do wrong to realize their mistakes and return to the right path (Maskat, personal communication, September 27, 2022). Followers of the Sedulur Sikep belief system tend to adopt the *semeleh* attitude because they believe that human behavior always has consequences or reciprocity, as stated by Mbah Niti.

Religious and belief leaders play a role in realizing and maintaining the stability of harmony among the religious communities in Karangrowo Village. They fulfill this role by translating religious teachings into a more accessible language so their followers can easily understand. These teachings are conveyed to their respective communities on every possible occasion. Subsequently, these teachings are implemented collectively and become customary in people's daily lives.

### **The Qur'anic Vision to Minorities and the Practice of Sunan Kudus in Promoting Tolerance in Kudus, Indonesia**

Pluralism in societies like Indonesia is a significant asset due to its diversity in religion, ethnicity, and culture. However, on the flip side, pluralism is also susceptible to conflicts and social tensions, especially when it involves majority and minority groups. Indonesia still has to nurture and maintain national unity amid a diverse society. Cases such as religions followed by a small population not officially

recognized by the government pose challenges that need solutions. Persecution of minority groups and disturbances at places of worship are examples of issues that frequently arise. Nevertheless, in some areas of Indonesia, including Karangrowo, Undaan, Kudus, Central Java, harmony in the pluralistic society is well-established, as explained above.

As the majority group, Islam plays a strategic role and holds a moral responsibility to be a pioneer of peace and harmony among people of different religions. The practices carried out by the Prophet in Medina, including establishing a social contract known as the Constitution of Medina, serve as a real-life example of how the Prophet demonstrated living in a diverse society with equal rights and responsibilities. The Qur'an also teaches tolerance towards diversity (al-Hujurat/49:13), justice and equality (an-Nahl/16:90 and al-Imran/3:195), freedom of religion (al-Baqarah/2:256), trustworthiness (an-Nisa/4:58), humanity and compassion (al-anbiya/21:107). Sunan Kudus also left a legacy of tolerance and accommodating differences within the Kudus community. It can be seen in the design of the Kudus Mosque's tower, which combines Islamic and Hindu architectural elements, and in prohibiting cows from being slaughtered during Eid al-Adha as an act of tolerance towards the Hindu community, who revere cows.

The harmony practiced in Karangrowo is considered the best practice in maintaining harmony. Islam, as the majority group, does not act arbitrarily towards minorities; all residents have equal rights. This spirit aligns with the practices of the Prophet, as seen in the Constitution of Medina, particularly in Article 46. It also reflects the teachings of the Qur'an, emphasizing appreciation for diversity (al-Hujurat/49:13) and the principles of fairness and equality, prohibiting any arbitrary actions (an-Nahl/16:90). The community in Karangrowo respects different beliefs and shows tolerance towards religious activities, in line with the Qur'an's principles (al-Baqarah/2:256). In the context of Medina, the Prophet has guaranteed freedom of religion for its residents, as stated in Article 25. The practice of harmony carried out by the people of Karangrowo Village also aligns with the values of tolerance taught by Sunan Kudus.

Additionally, the community there collaborated across religious lines, joining efforts in various village activities such as communal cleaning, mutual assistance in building houses (*sambatan*), drying rice, wedding traditions, circumcision ceremonies, and more. This sense of togetherness reflects the teachings of the Prophet, where both Muslim and Jewish communities in Medina shared the financial burdens of war and defense to preserve the integrity of Medina as stated in Article 37 of the constitution of Medina.

What the people of Karangrowo have done is a best practice in maintaining harmony in a pluralistic society that can serve as an inspiration or reference for other regions to teach the values of tolerance, appreciation for minorities, and equality in rights and responsibilities in community life. Particularly for majority groups like Islam, there is an obligation to be a pioneer of peace with the spirit of teachings from the Qur'an and the practices of the Prophet in Medina, as well as Sunan Kudus's teaching, to create an inclusive society.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Pluralistic societies like Indonesia are susceptible to conflicts, especially when it comes to majority-minority relationships. Cases of discrimination, intimidation, and intolerance against minority groups pose challenges that require serious attention to prevent similar incidents. Islam, as the majority group, has a moral responsibility to be a peacemaker and encourage all elements of society to work together in maintaining the unity and integrity of Indonesia.

The practices of Prophet Muhammad in Medina, as reflected in the Medina Charter, are a real-life example of how Islam upholds tolerance for differences. There is no dichotomy between majority and minority; all citizens are equal regardless of religion or background. The principles of pluralism in the Qur'an are evident in al-Hujurat/49:13, the principles of justice and equality (an-Nahl/16:90 and al-Imran/3:195), the principle of religious freedom (al-Baqarah/2:256), the principle of trustworthiness (an-Nisa/4:58), and the principle of humanity and compassion (al-anbiya/21:107). Sunan Kudus's tolerance and respect for people of different religions are legacies that the people of Kudus must firmly uphold to weave an inclusive society.

The teachings of the Qur'an and the practices of the Prophet, exemplified in the Medina Charter, as well as the wisdom value of Sunan Kudus, serve as inspiration and a reference point for building a peaceful and harmonious society amidst diversity. The harmonious practices in Karangrowo, Undaan, Kudus, Central Java, represent a miniature of tolerance in Indonesia that aligns with the principles of the Qur'an. The best practices in Karangrowo can serve as an example for other regions to develop inclusive communities.

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