

Interreligious Relations in Several Regions in Indonesia



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ABSTRACT: This article wants to explain about religious conflicts that occurred in several regions in Indonesia. All conflicts can be resolved properly and people of different religions can live in harmony with one another. Religious conflicts can be avoided if members of different religious groups can respect one another's differences. This research was conducted in 2019-2020, in several regions in Indonesia. The method used to collect data is observation and in-depth interviews with religious, traditional and government leaders. The findings in this research, the unfavorable relationship between religions is caused by factors outside of religion.

KEYWORDS: Religions, Conflicts, Ethnic Groups, Resolution, Harmony

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country of more than 250,000 people, with a variety of religions, cultures, languages, and ethnic groups. Based on the population survey or the 2015 census, Indonesia's population is projected to reach 266.91 in 2019. Indonesia is divided into 34 provinces, 486 regencies, 6,793 districts, 72,944 villages, and 81,253 sub-districts. Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world compared to other countries. Not only is Islam the only religion adhered to by the population of Indonesia, but there are also Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddha, and Confucius (Tanggok, 2000). Outside of these six religions, the Indonesian people also adhere to Taoism, Bahaism, and ethnic religions. 90% of Indonesian people adhere to Islam, and the remaining 10% adhere to non-Islamic religions.

Although Islam is the largest and majority religion in Indonesia, but in several provinces in Indonesia there are still frequent bombings of places of worship, arson, and inter-religious conflict, which are caused by various problems. Islam is the majority religion in Indonesia, despite overall religion, but there are several provinces and districts in Indonesia in which Islam is a religious minority group, and Christian is the majority religious group.

Because Indonesia is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-political party country, we often hear inter-ethnic and religious conflicts that can threaten Indonesian security in some regions in Indonesia. In Indonesia, religion does not only function as a way of life for every follower, but also functions as an identity. Therefore, religion is often used as a tool for choosing a leader, and as a tool for winning a political party.

METODOLOGY

The method used in this research is qualitative method. According to Creswell (2009) explains that qualitative research is methods for exploring and understanding the meanings that a number of individuals or groups of people ascribe to social or humanitarian issues. Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, and sometimes counter disciplinary, field. Qualitative research deals with the humanities, social sciences and physical sciences. At the same time qualitative research has many meanings. It has a focus of attention with multiple paradigms. Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, and sometimes counter disciplinary, field. Qualitative research deals with the humanities, social sciences and physical sciences. At the same time qualitative research has many meanings. It has a focus of attention with multiple paradigms (Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, 1997: 5). Monique Henink, et al. (2011: 8-9 in Comas Gatot Haryono, 2020), Qualitative research is an approach that allows researchers to observe experiences in detail, using methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, content analysis, virtual methods, and life history or biographies. In this research, the method used to collect data is observation and in-depth interviews with religious, traditional and government leaders. Interviews were conducted in Jakarta, Papua and West Papua. The problems asked were interreligious relations in their respective regions. The problems asked were interreligious relations in their respective regions. The data that has been obtained is analyzed and written in a research report.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Since the downfall of the second president, Soeharto, in 1998, several inter-religious conflicts occurred in several regions in Indonesia, including inter-religious conflicts that occurred in Poso (and the surrounding area in Central Sulawesi), Ambon (in

Interreligious Relations in Several Regions in Indonesia

Maluku province), North Sumatra, West Java, and Papua. The conflict between Muslims and Christians in Ambon originated from fights between Christian youth and Islamic youth, whom were thugs, in 1999. This conflict shifted to religious conflict, namely Christian homes were burned, and included several Christian properties also burned. Thus, among them reciprocated between the two religious' groups. As a result of the long conflict, many Bugis Muslims from Sulawesi left Ambon, and returned to Sulawesi. One of the reasons for the religious conflict in Ambon in 1999 was jealousy of Maluku indigenous people towards immigrants who have economic social status the is higher than them (S Waileruny, 2010).

The Maluku conflict is often depicted as the old enmity between Muslims and Christian, although the situation is more complicated. Maluku violent conflict especially concentrated in Ambon, which is one of the most destructive conflicts that disintegrated after the fall of the Suharto regime. From 1999 to 2002, this conflict claimed nearly 5000 people who died and make up a third of the population of Maluku and North Maluku fled (Jerry Indrawan, Ananda Tania Putri, 2022). One of factor of the Maluku conflict is the formation of the new sub-district of Makian Malifut based on PP. No.42/1999 has received rejection from the Kao community because it is considered contrary to customary law (Jamin Safi, 2017).

According to Rudolf Raabeat (2021), a Christian religious pastor from Ambon-Maluku, after the case of conflict between Christians and Islam in Ambon in 1999, nowadays Bugis Muslims leave Ambon city when the conflict occurs and some have returned to Ambon, and there are also among those who no longer want to return to Ambon because they feel traumatized or are still afraid. For Bugis Muslims who have returned to Ambon, they have started to trade again in the markets, and only in their homes they still live in groups of fellow Muslims in Ambon, and do not mingle with Christians. According to Raabeat, he and Muslim figures, lecturers at the IAIN (Institute of Islamic Religion) Ambon, tried to work together to unite Muslims and Christians in Ambon so that relations between religions would be good. According to Subair (2015) quoted by Raabeat (2021) after the Ambon city conflict, since 2004 integration between Christians and Islam has begun to occur in five villages, namely Latta, Nania, Waiheru, Laha, and Poka villages. Even though they live in one village, their settlement pattern is still religiously separated. Muslims who live are fellow Muslims, and those who live in Christianity live in groups with Christians.

Apart from Ambon, there were conflicts in other regions such as East Java, and several other regions in Indonesia. The burning of places of worship, bombings of places of worship, shootings and killings, often occur in the area. In 2000, and coinciding on Christmas Eve for Christians, there were bombings of several churches in Jakarta. The churches affected by the bombings were: Cathedral Church, Kanesus Church, Saint Joseph Church, Koinonia Church, and Church of the Oikumene Fellowship (Jakarta, Liputan6.com, December 25, 2000). On November 13, 2016, a bomb exploded in front of the Oikumene Church in Samarinda, East Kalimantan (Kompas.com, November 20, 2016). On July 17, 2015, when Muslims would perform the Eid al-Fitr prayers, a market burning occurred, and the mosque in the middle of the market was on fire, which was carried out by a group of Christians in Tolikara, Papua (Republika Daily, Friday, July 17, 2015). On July 29, 2016, there were four temples and one temple (Buddhist place of worship) which were burned by hundreds of people (Muslims) in Tanjung Balai, North Sumatra (Tribunnews.com, 30 July 2016). Precisely on Thursday, October 29, 2015, thousands of mobs protested against the construction of mosques in the region of Andai, Manokwari, West Papua. For the reason, the construction of the mosque did not have a Building Construction Permit (IMB), and also tarnished Christians in Andai because this area was the first time the Gospel spread (Kompas.com, 25-10-2015). Every Christmas, the churches used by Christians for celebrating Christmas in Jakarta and several regions in Indonesia, are also guarded by the police just so that no bombs will be detonated by people who feel displeased with religions outside Islam. All of these cases can make relations between religious groups in Indonesia less favorable, and indicate a lack of harmony between Muslims and non-Muslims.

On December 2, 2016, there was a large-scale demonstration in Jakarta, where millions of Muslims from all over Indonesia gathered at the MONAS (Jakarta National Monument), demanding the Indonesian Government that Basuki Cahya Purnama (former Governor of Jakarta; a Chinese, and a Christian) be punished, or put in jail. The reason was when he visited Pramuka Island (Kepulauan Seribu, September 27, 2016), and gave a speech in front of the Muslim community there. In his speech, he was considered to be insulting the Koran, the Surat al-Maidah, Verse 51, by some Muslims. For the part of the Islamic community, his speech was considered as a defamation or insult to the Koran, especially the Surat al-Maidah, Verse 51 (www.bbc.com, December 2, 2016). This incident has heated up the political *temperature*, and also made the relation between religious groups in Jakarta less than good. Although this activity did not cause inter-religious conflict, it could have made the relation between Islam and Christianity less good. After the case was brought to court, Basuki was finally sentenced to two years in prison. After living in a detention center for two years, he has now been released, and has become an ordinary citizen, and the relationship between Islam and non-Islam in Jakarta has improved.

In 2018, a conflict between Muslims and Christians again occurred in Papua, precisely in West Koya, Muara Tami District, Jayapura City, Papua. In the conflict, Ustadz (Muslim preacher) Ja'far Umar Thalib was named a suspect for the destruction of a house (belonged to a Christian) in West Koya, and he was put in prison by the police due to his actions. The facts are as follows: Starting when Henock Niki (41) played loud volume of spiritual music at her home, on Jalan Kookol Barat, Muara Tami District, Jayapura, on Wednesday, February 27, 2019, at around 5:30 a.m. WIB (Indonesian Time for the Western Part). Suddenly Henock was visited by seven Muslims carrying sharp weapons. The seven people, including Ustadz Ja'far Umar Thalib, who rebuked him

Interreligious Relations in Several Regions in Indonesia

for interfering with their worship at the mosque. Police said Ustadz Ja'far ordered his two students, namely AJU (20) and S (42), to use his samurai sword to cut the sound cable at the victim's house. The two samurai swords were also secured by the police. "The evidences that were secured were a yellow samurai sword, a red samurai sword, pieces of sound cable, two sound speakers (broken), one vehicle unit of black Mitsubishi Triton with a police number DS-8366-J," (Detik News, March 9, 2019). This conflict did not involve other Christians and Muslims, only between Ja'far Umar Thalib and his students (Islam), and the Henock Niki's family who were Christians. This conflict did not get enlarged because the perpetrators had been detained by the police.

Another case is the presence of an obstacle to worship by a group of Muslims against the congregation of Philadelphia of the Indonesian Bethel Church (GBI) in Medan. The action was viral on social media after being uploaded by the Instagram account of @eunikeyulia. In the description of her post, she mentioned that she was conducting a morning service on Sunday, January 13, 2019. Then she said that her church was attacked (by a group of people), and was forced to close the church. She further said, *"Sunday, January 13, 2019, when we wanted to start the morning service, our church was attacked, and (the people who attacked) forced the church to close. They forced in to disrupt our worship."*

Again, Eunike said, *"We, the Christians at the Indonesian Bethel Church, the Philadelphia Congregation (at Jalan Permai 4, Blok 8, Griya Martubung, No. 31, Besar Sub-district, Medan Labuhan District, North Sumatra), only worship once a week (on request by the local residents), and we have done it."*

Eunike also said that she only did worship, not to do anything else; in her upload, she also asked for justice; even asking President Jokowi to take action against it.

She continued her statement, "And here we do not do anything forbidden. We only worship, but why was our church attacked this morning? Where is justice in this country? Where is the tolerance of religious people? God is with us," (Yulita Futy Hapsari on TRIBUN-VIDEO.COM, Monday, January 14, 2019).

For this incident, the Association of North Sumatra Regional Workers' Assembly (MPH-PGIW) issued a statement regarding the ban on the worship of the Philadelphia Congregation of the Indonesian Bethel Church (GBI), Medan Labuhan, North Sumatra. He hoped that all parties would seek a peaceful solution to resolve this issue. One of the statements of the attitude was as follows: *"Our country is a legal state in which the UUD 1945 (1945 Constitution) as the legal basis in this country, expressly gives freedom for everyone to embrace religion, and worship according to their religion, and the state guarantees the independence of each of its inhabitants to embrace religion, because religion is a human right. The disobedience of worship of the Philadelphia Congregation of the GBI indicates that there are still many citizens who violate the 1945 Constitution, and also violate the constitutional rights of citizens."* The contents of the statement were as follows: *"Ask the state to provide legal guarantees and protection for citizens who do their worship through a strict set of legal policies or legislation."* The statement was signed by the General Chair of MPH-PGIW, Bishop Darwis Manurung, S.Th, M.Psi.

The efforts of these two religions groups to establish good relations are still being carried out. One example, in 2019 there were several churches that held joint iftar. Among them were the Jakarta Cathedral Church and the Bogor Cathedral Church. The church administrators invited the surrounding Muslims to jointly do iftar together. One of the goals was to establish good relations between Christians and Muslims in Jakarta and Bogor. "I am very grateful to my Muslim brothers and sisters, accepting our invitation to break the fast today. Let us respect one another," said Bishop Paskalis Bruno Syukur, OFM, from the Bishopric of Bogor, when he gave a speech at the event. According to him, this invitation to break the fast for Muslims was as an effort to support inter-religious freedom of worship because the religions diversity was regarded as something that made the Indonesian State still existed. He also said, "We, as religious people, indeed support one another. This means that if we live in religion and faith, and if we are not explicitly expressed, our faith becomes unreal," he said (*AntaraNews.com*, May 20, 2019). Iftar together is often done by non-Muslims and invites Muslims in the month of Ramadan. The aim is to strengthen relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. This event does not only occur in Jakarta and Bogor but also in other areas outside Jakarta and Bogor.

In Yogyakarta, Christians have a way to strengthen the relationship between Christianity and Islam, one of which is what is done by the Faculty of Theology, Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana Yogyakarta. The method is to create an Intensive Islamic Study Program (SIKTI). The activity is called the "living in," whereas the pastors stay a few days in the Islamic boarding school, and learned about Islam there. One Muslim cleric who is often invited by the church to explain about this is Kyai Muhaimin. Another way is: Young people from various religious groups hold joint camps, and they carry out various activities in the camp's activity (an interview with Prof. Munir Mulkan in Yogyakarta. He from the board of Muhammadiyah Organization-Indonesia) (16-07-2019). In the tradition of the people of Yogyakarta, from the beginning until now, the graves of Muslims and Christians are joined together. According to Mulkan, a year ago there was an attempt by a group of Muslims in Yogya to separate Islamic cemeteries from Christian burials. But the effort was rejected by the Yogyakarta Regional Government. According to Edi (a Muslim) in Salatiga, Yogyakarta, Muslim and Christian burials are mixed in one location (an interview, 10 July 2019).

My opinion, a similar effort was also made by the Ushuluddin Faculty (Theology), State Islamic University "Syarif Hidayatullah" Jakarta, which opened a program of study of religions outside of Islam. Those who study in this program are all non-Muslims, while some of the lecturers are Muslim and some are non-Muslims.

Interreligious Relations in Several Regions in Indonesia

According to Rev. Rudolf Rahabeat (a Christian priest in Ambon, Maluku), during his studies in Yogyakarta, he tried to unite Muslim and Christian figures. One way is to invite Islamic lecturers to teach Islam at Sekolah Tinggi Teologi (Theological College) in Yogyakarta. There were several lecturers from Universitas Islam Negeri (Yogyakarta State Islamic University) teaching at Sekolah Tinggi Teologi. This effort is still going on until now, and the relationship between Muslim and Christian figures has gone well (2021). The efforts carried out by Rehabeat need to be expanded to other regions in Indonesia.

Rahabeat also explained that the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Ambon is now going quite well. According to him, after the conflict between Muslims and Christians had finished in Ambon in 2004, Muslim immigrants from Makassar who had fled to Makassar (Sulawesi) at the time of the conflict, and now they returned to Ambon to trade in Ambon, and business ventures others. Although now they (Muslims) have been able to live in one location with Christians, but Muslims who come from Makassar still live in groups with their fellow Muslims, and do not want to stay mingled with Christians. According to Rahabeat, now there is no problem with the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Ambon, but there is still a feeling of prejudice between one another (2021). This prejudice can be eliminated if they often meet, cooperate and carry out dialogue to resolve religious relations problems.

Apart from Ambon, how is the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Papua? Based on interviews with several Christians and Muslims from Papua who work in Jakarta, basically the relationship between Islam and Christianity in Papua is peaceful; unlike in Maluku, whereas Islam and Christianity are always conflicts caused by provocateurs, even though Maluku people are one-taste or one-tribe with Papuans. Overall the relationship between Islam and Christianity is very good, working together to cooperate in social relations, such as carnival events in Papua that involve all the people, and do not see from the elements of religion. But there are some Papuans who see from the side of custom or culture, both Papuan Muslims and Christians, the relationship is very harmonious. Papuans still see Muslims in Papua as migrants, although many of them are born in Papua. According to them, Muslims born in Papua follow behavior that is not like indigenous Papuans, but is like the behavior as migrants.

I conducted interviews with three Papuans living in Jakarta At the end of 2019. They are Mr. Korwa (born in Jayapura-Papua, age 37, a Christian), Mrs. Oliev (born in Papua and a Christian), and Fajar Kuban (born in Wales, Papua; a student of the Faculty of Ushuluddin, Study Program of Religions, State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, a Muslim). Their opinion regarding several conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Papua several years ago, particularly in Tolikara District, is as follows:

I asked them about the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Papua. They said, "Our relationship between fellow Papuans, who are of different religions, is quite harmonious, regardless of the religion we believe in. Some of us in families have different religions, such as Christianity and Islam who live in one *honai* (traditional home of Papuans). For example, on Eid al-Fitr, we (Christians) always help them (Muslims) cook, bake cakes, and greet happy Eid al-Fitr; and otherwise; on Christmas, our Muslim brothers also help us, Christians, who will celebrate Christmas; however, with the influence of the Islamic teaching brought by immigrants (Muslims), we kind of feel disturbed, as if we judge that immigrants' Islamic teaching as a form of Islamization in Papua, thus that makes Papuan Christians keep their distance from immigrants who are Muslim, who are seen as developing Islamic teaching in Papua." Based on my observations, in several areas in Papua and West Papua, the tradition of mutual assistance between Muslims and Christians in Papua is still being preserved, so that between them have a strong sense of friendship.

Their opinion on the role of religions in Papua in maintaining harmony? They said: "The basis of the teaching of our faith (Christian) is love. So Papuans basically teach or practice religious teaching about love; because during services in the Church, we are always taught about love, how to give and receive with fellow humans; through this teaching of love, we can accept other people, accept the presence of other people who come to Papua, by not seeing the backgrounds of religious, ethnic, cultural, and others." In my opinion, the teachings of love taken from Christian teachings are still practiced by Papuans today. For example, in Sentani District, West Papua Province, and other areas in Papua, Christians and Muslims live side by side and they love one another.

Their opinion on the conflict between Muslims and Christians in Tolikara Regency, Papua (2015): They said: "I knew a little about the conflict between Muslims and Christians in Tolikara in 2015. The problem in Tolikara occurred because of a misunderstanding between Christian communities and immigrant Muslims in Tolikara. A few days before the Tolikara incident, the association of church organizations in Papua carried out a sweeping reminder to immigrant Muslims: They may perform Eid al-Fitr prayers (2015), but do not use the loudspeaker. But the warning was ignored by immigrant Muslims. The climax was when Muslims was performing Eid al-Fitr prayer using the loudspeaker, there were several provocateurs from a group of young GIDI (the Gospel Movement in Indonesia) who was carrying out arson stalls near the place where Muslims was performing Eid al-Fitr prayer. Actually, the place used by Muslims for Eid al-Fitr prayer was not a mosque, but a hall, or a house belonging to Muslim immigrants which was used as a place for Eid al-Fitr prayer. A group of GIDI youths initially argued to curb street stalls, incidentally the stalls that were issued (burned) were located close to the hall which will be used as the place for Eid al-Fitr prayer, and the prayer hall was also burned, but there were no casualties. Issues circulating in the media, that a mosque in Tolikara was burned by Christians, was a hoax; whereas in Tolikara at that time there was no mosque. This hoax was "fried" or published continuously on social media so that it can disturb the harmony of relations between religious people in Papua."

They also said: "However, from the incident, the Local Government gathered all elements of the security forces (TNI,

Interreligious Relations in Several Regions in Indonesia

Police), traditional leaders, communities, and religious leaders, both Islam and Christianity. The result of the meeting was an agreement to build a mosque in Tolikara. Now the Tolikara case is over, and people of different religions live in harmony. The number of Muslims in Tolikara is very small, and is added by immigrant Muslims. In the construction of mosques in Tolikara (post-conflict), non-Muslims (Papuan) also took part in building the mosque.” “On the other hand, after the incident, there was a policy from the Regional Government, in which that on Sunday there should not be activities such as trade, not going to work, and Muslims should not wear attributes of religious symbols such as veils. According to him, a special Sunday was for the day of worship, but Papuan Muslims rejected the policy, yet the FKUB (Religious Harmony Forum) held a dialogue with the government, that according to him, every citizen has the right to do activities and worship, so the regulation was finally canceled by the government.” My opinion, the conflict between Muslims and Christians in Tolikara in 2015 could be resolved properly because of dialogue between religious leaders, security forces and traditional leaders. For this reason, inter-religious dialogue must continue to be preserved. Regarding the Tolikara case, Moh. Rasyid (2015) said that one of the reasons for the occurrence of inter-religious conflict in Tolikara was due to the implementation of a seminar by the Indonesian Gospel Church (GiDi) which coincided with the ritual of the Idul Fitri prayer by Muslims in the area.

I also asked them about building places of worship for Muslims and Christians. they said: "There is no prohibition on the construction of places of worship, whether mosques or churches; precisely the people in Papua, who are from villages, feel helped by the construction of mosques because the Papuans (who are from the villages) feel helped by the sound of the *call to prayer* (adhan), which means that it is already late, and Christians must be prepared to go home from their gardens and fields; however, some non-Islamic communities, who live in such a housing complex (home clusters), are disturbed by the presence of the loudspeakers (*adhan*). There is a policy from the Central Government to regulate about the loudspeaker of the adhan in Papua in order to make the religious life becomes peaceful.” My opinion, the attitude of mutual respect between people of different religions, especially in Papua, must be improved. In Papua this mutual respect has been carried out well.

Their views on the inter-religious conflict in Papua, especially Islam and Christianity. They said: "In Papua, such horizontal conflicts over the name of religions (Islam and Christianity) are few, almost nonexistent, since the percentage of Muslims as the minority, and Christians as the majority, which causes little conflicts over the name of religion. Different cases to Poso (Sulawesi North), where the number of Muslims is almost balanced with the number of Christians, where the potential for conflicts will occur more quickly. If the number of Muslims and Christians is balanced in Papua, surely the potential for the movement of conflicts over the name of religions will occur faster, even more widening to even bigger problems." My opinion, religious conflicts are always triggered by issues outside of religion, such as political and economic issues.

They also said: “The conflict in Papua is not caused by the religion, but rather from trivial matters, for example: There is a girl from Kampung A, tempted by a boy from Kampung B, and apparently in Kampung A there is also a boy who likes the girl of Kampung B, so that's where a conflict between ethnic groups occurs. Or another example: A runaway marriage between Tribe A and Tribe B, can also cause conflict. Thus, the conflicts arising from religion, especially Islam and Christianity, are almost uncommon.” My opinion, conflicts between ethnic groups, conflicts over a woman, do not only occur in Papua, but can also occur in other areas outside Papua. Muslims in Papua are a minority, they (especially Muslims who come from outside Papua) can adjust to the majority group. In 2019 I visited Keerom District, Papua Province, I met many Javanese people who live there, work as farmers, they have lived in Keerom for more than 40 years, they are still happy living there, because between indigenous tribes (Papua) and immigrant communities respect each other and work together.

CONCLUSION

From the explanation above it can be concluded:

1. Because Indonesia consists of various ethnic groups, languages, cultures and religions, it is very prone to conflict. Religious conflicts are always preceded by other conflicts, such as ethnic conflicts and politic. Not all ethnic conflicts cause religious conflicts.
2. Islam is the majority religion in Indonesia, but there are certain areas where Muslims are a minority group. As long as the minority and majority groups can mutually respect each other's differences, then conflict will not occur. Mutual respect is the main key to live in peace and harmony.
3. Ambon, Poso, Medan, Jakarta and Papua are areas where inter-religious conflicts have occurred, but these conflicts were resolved properly and now they are living in peace with one another. Currently, relations between religious adherents in Ambon, Poso, Medan, West Java, Yogyakarta, Jakarta and Papua are going well. They can respect each other and cooperate in social activities.

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Interreligious Relations in Several Regions in Indonesia

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