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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Role of Interfaith Dialogue in Completing the Construction of Worship Place (Efforts to Keep the Spirit of Nationalism)

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**Abstract:** Interfaith dialogue is a discussion or exchange of certain information between followers of various religions as a way to achieve cooperation of common interests. Religious or faith dialogue has an important role to form a spirit of nationalism and prevent intolerance, which still often occurs in Indonesia, especially in religion aspect. One example of an intolerance religious case is the rejection of the construction related to a place of worship by followers of a particular religion and believers, citing concerns about damaging the image and culture of the area. Therefore, dialogue between religious communities is very necessary as a way to prevent intolerance. This dialogue aims to instill the value of tolerance and strengthen pluralism in Indonesia. The research methods employed in this problem are descriptive and normative research by conducting documentation and case studies that refer to primary and secondary legal sources supporting the study on the relationship between interfaith dialogue communities and the spirit of nationalism. The research findings indicate a correlation between these both aspects. Religion and nationality are two things that are interrelated between obstacles and support. Dialogue between religious communities is also a form of participation in religious values that must be supported and maintained by both the government and Indonesian society in order to create tolerance, which is the beginning of the rise of the nationalism spirit.

**Keywords:** dialogue between religious communities, religion, the spirit of nationalism, intolerance, and pluralism.

## 1. Introduction

Dialogue is a form of conversation between two or more people with the aim of conveying information regarding the truth and understanding of a subject. Interfaith dialogue can be stated as an exchange of ideas or discussions between followers of various religions as well as communication between people who believe in religion as a way to achieve cooperation on common interests (Hasan, 2018). In addition, dialogue between religious communities is also a means of sharing information related to religion with tolerance between respective religious leaders. Dialogue between religious communities has the function of avoiding disputes in the name of religion and making the name of religion viewed unfavorably. As time goes on, many factors can divide the feeling and spirit of nationalism, one of which is due to religious intolerance.

Interfaith dialogue between religious communities has provided a good example of tolerance, but it cannot be denied that conflict still occur among various communities. This can undermine the spirit of nationalism in society, especially because the problems range from small to large scale. One the problems is the rejection of the construction of a



mosque related to the issue of conflict over the religion between the non-Muslim majority and beliefs in one region of Indonesia. Some traditional groups consider that the construction of mosques can damage the surrounding environment and culture. Meanwhile, non-Muslim adherents are worried that the construction of a mosque may disrupt their religious life (Yulianto, 2018). This problem arises due to the lack of dialogue and a more judicious approach from all parties involved in the mosque construction. As a result, the majority of the non-Muslim is unaware of it. This creates heated political conditions and foster religious intolerance among communities.

Recently, there have also been obstacles in building a house of worship that have disturbed one of the religious communities because that person kept animals that were considered “haram” (Awit Wiarni, 2023). This intolerance is becoming widespread and has the potential to break the spirit of nationalism, especially as it is known that the spirit of nationalism is important and based on a strong collective desire. Interfaith dialogue is conducted in order to prevent intolerance. Religious leaders participating in interfaith dialogue serve as examples for the people of their own religion in tolerance towards other religions. Tolerance also has a role in educating religious followers on interacting with those of other religions. Of course, it has the potential to reduce intolerance which is currently common in Indonesia.

## 2. Research Methods and Materials

The research utilized a descriptive approach (Kusumastuti & Ahmad Mustamil Khoiron, 2019; Rukajat, 2018; Sugiyono, 2019) This research focuses on observing or describing a phenomenon in depth, such as the process of interaction between groups in accepting and dealing with phenomena that occur in society (Martono, 2012). Normative legal research is research that creates law a building block of norms (legislation, legal teachings, etc.) (Soekanto, 2007). This research used normative research methods. This type of research examined applicable legal norms and was related to the topic being researched, such as legislation and other legal documents (Achmad, 2004). Normative legal research employed secondary data in the form of articles, books, and journals that have been published on the topics studied (Hajar, 2017).

## 3. Results and Discussion

Nationalism can be formulated as a form of consciousness. The meaning of Nationalism is a movement based on the collective desire of a nation to realize a fighting spirit (Irhandayaningsih, 2015). The spirit of nationalism is the spirit of the nation to move forward together without exception. In fact, most regions in Indonesia still have challenges or obstacles, particularly in the field of interfaith tolerance, such as Papua. In 2016, Jayapura Regency of Papua had integrated integrity zone planning to maintain religious, cultural values, and harmony. However, in 2018, the Jayapura Churches Association (PGGJ) rejected and protested the construction of the Al Aqsa Sentani Grand Mosque in Papua by issuing a letter. The contents of the letter stated that the local government would stop the construction of the mosque. Moreover, there is another reason, namely, the construction of the Al Aqsa Sentani Grand Mosque which is taller will block the church around the mosque and in its construction will also cover the entrance to the church. This is the beginning of the conflict problem in Papua (Sentani, 2016).

This is not the first case occurred in Papua because in 2015, there were rejection to development and an action of burning a mosque in one area of Papua. Even though Papua was selected as an Integrity Zone, there are still a number of parties who do not agree with the construction of this mosque. However, in the 2018 case, MUI Papua received a letter from PGGJ and respected it. Recently, regarding the misunderstanding of the height of the Great Mosque of Al Aqsa Sentani, it has also been acknowledged by Islamic representatives that there was a lack of communication regarding the mosque, which was supposed to have seven floors instead of two. Both parties did not take any action that was physically detrimental to the government by damaging facilities. In the end, the regional government

asked both parties, both MUI and PGGJ, to discuss this matter (Sholih, 2018). This deliberation can be likened to a dialogue, where religious representatives dialogue engages in discussion and express their opinions to resolve and find a middle point in this case.

After holding deliberations where they had religious dialogue, there were five final decisions taken, as follows (NU Online, 2016):

- 1) Sentani Mosque will be built as high as the Mosque Dome.
- 2) Regarding the 8 points of the PGGJ position statement, which was submitted on March 15 2018, it will be submitted to the Regional Government and regulated according to the provisions' legislation.
- 3) Places of worship should be built in such a way that they can become symbols of religious diversity in Jayapura district as Zones of Harmony Integrity.
- 4) To keep and maintain harmony between religious communities in Jayapura Regency, it is necessary to carry out interfaith dialogue and social service cooperation, which will be regulated by the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) of Jayapura Regency, especially Jayawijaya regency.
- 5) It is necessary to issue regional regulations that refer to the spirit of Khenambai Umbai and the Harmony Integrity Zone as the spirit and soul that will regulate the lives of Indonesian children who live in Jayapura regency.

It is considered that this problem has been resolved and this decision has also been accepted by both parties.

From the cases that have occurred in Papua, it can be concluded that the role of interfaith dialogue is crucial because the resolution between religious leaders is a culmination of the resolving the conflict that has occurred. Thus, interfaith dialogue should continue to be conducted in daily life, especially in Papua, as it is an integrated area with significance cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious differences. These can increase the spirit of nationalism in national life and patriotic.

Dialogue between religious communities in Papua also took place from 20 to 22 September 2019 and this was carried out with the theme of maintaining and strengthening religious harmony, which was held in Jayapura city. Religious leaders from all districts or cities in Papua or West Papua Province gathered and discussed various problems and alternatives to conflict related to religious harmony (Fransiska Ninditya, 2021). From this interfaith dialogue, thirteen recommendations have also been produced, one of the resulting recommendations concerns the establishment of places of worship in accordance with regulations and regarding intolerance and information dissemination that has the potential to cause conflict on social media (Indonesian Ministry of Religion, 2019 (Kemenag RI, 2019). From this action, Papua has learned that religious dialogue is important both for deliberation to resolve cases and efforts to prevent intolerance that could occur. If there is no dialogue between religious communities, it is possible that the conflict in Papua could cause divisions within the nation and state. The form of division itself could be in the form of war between religious communities. If this happens, there is a very large possibility of murder levels, leading to riots due to the lack of tolerance.

Apart from religious dialogue, harmony is also part of Indonesian law, specifically in Law Number 11 of 2021 concerning permits to construct buildings for places of worship (Republik Indonesia, 2020). As one of the countries that has and makes law the nation's guide, Indonesia provides guarantees for the Human Rights (HAM) of its citizens through the Indonesian state constitution, namely the 1945 Republic of Indonesia Constitution. One of the guarantees of these rights is the right to freedom of religion, which is stated in the Republic of Indonesian Constitution of 1945 article 28E paragraph (2) and article 29. The right to freedom of religion itself actually covers two aspects, namely the freedom to choose and determine a religion or belief of one's own choice and the freedom to practice a religion or belief independently or together with other people whether in public or private places, through worship, arrangement, experience, and teaching (Republik Indonesia, 1945).

Religious dialogue, which has become an effort and solution to maintain harmony in the Papua region, must also be implemented in every region in Indonesia. Papua itself has become a national integration zone, where from the Papua region, people can see how the spirit of nationalism grows from the values of tolerance and harmony. The harmony created is a spirit of mutual cooperation for progress, and there is clear evidence that this is happening in Papua. Interfaith dialogue is not an easy process but it is not impossible. From differences, it becomes unifying factor for the nation, as stated in the Republic of Indonesia Law article 28E and 29. Every citizen has the right to have their own right to freedom of religion but we must not forget that Indonesia has Pancasila as the basis of the state and the 1st principle which reads "belief in the one and only God" as well as the third principles, which reads "Indonesian unity" indicates that citizens with different religions still have the same Indonesian nation. Therefore, religious dialogue will be one of the activities to unite the Indonesian nation in an effort to instill a spirit of nationalism to reduce barriers in the name of religion.

#### 4. Conclusion

Interfaith dialogue can be an effort and solution to build and maintain the spirit of nationalism. Religious dialogue, in the form of deliberations between religions, has an impact on tolerance and harmony to prevent division and conflict. Dialogue between religious communities not only fosters these values. In its process, religious dialogue can become a good habit in strengthening relations between religious communities. Dialogue between religious communities is very important for the life of the nation and state, especially Indonesia because this is a country with a lot of diversity ranging from ethnicity, language, race, religion, and many others. This diversity is further heightened by the numerous islands in Indonesia, each with its own cultural distinction. In this context, interfaith dialogue becomes a strong factor in maintaining the integrity of national and state life in order to achieve efforts to build a spirit of nationalism.

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