



**RELIGIOUS MINORITY AND PEACEFUL
COEXISTENCE:**

**The Dynamics of the Ahmadiyya Community
in Malang, Indonesia**

**Asfa Widiyanto¹, Mohamad Nur Kholis Setiawan²,
Nur Fajriyah Rohmat¹, Sidqon Maesur¹**

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga, ²Universitas Islam Negeri

Prof. Dr. KH. Saifudin Zuhri Purwokerto

Correspondence email: widiyanto_asfa@daad-alumni.de

Abstract: The position of the Ahmadiyya is problematic since it claims to be a part of the Muslim community, but it is considered a deviant sect by the mainstream Sunni Muslims in Indonesia. There has been persecution and violence towards this minority. The violence towards the Ahmadiyya increased most notably after the issuance of a joint ministerial decree in 2008, which limits the activities and proselytization of the Ahmadiyya. Interestingly, although affected by the national and regional discourse on the Ahmadiyya, the Ahmadiyya community in Malang, East Java, still lives peacefully with other faith communities. By employing qualitative content analysis, the present study examines the dynamics of the Ahmadiyya as a religious minority in the context of a plural society in Malang, East Java. More specifically, it investigates two main research problems, namely the Ahmadiyya community's agency in response to the limitation of their activities and the socio-political and socio-religious factors relatively supporting peaceful life of the Ahmadiyya community. This study reveals a distinct picture that stays in contrast to the majority of Ahmadiyya communities in Indonesia, which is often associated with discrimination and persecution.

Keywords: Ahmadiyya, joint-ministerial decree, peaceful coexistence, agency, religious minority.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v28i1.671>

Introduction

POST-SUHARTO Indonesia witnessed discrimination and violence towards religious minorities,¹ including the Ahmadiyya. Violence towards the Ahmadiyya took place in some places of the country. The Ahmadiyya adherents in East Lombok, for instance, faced persecution and violence from the mainstream Sunni Muslims. It is reported that eight houses of the Ahmadiyya followers were destroyed.² The Sunni Muslim community objected to the presence of the Ahmadiyya followers in their neighborhood

The Ahmadiyya is a religious movement founded by Indian figure Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908). Some specialists classify Ahmadiyya as a 'theological movement,' while others consider it an 'intellectual movement.'³ Ahmadis consider themselves to be part of the Muslim community and even assume that their religious practices conform to the teachings of pure Islam. However, the Ahmadiyya point of view is opposed by mainstream Sunni Muslims, mainly because the alleged Ahmadiyya rejects Muhammad as the last prophet. Another point of view of Ahmadiyya that is often debated is the conception of revelation, the death of the Prophet Jesus, and the Messiah.⁴

In Indonesia, the Ahmadiyya constitutes a 'religious minority group'. It, therefore, has to deal with the limits of religious freedom that can be carried out in the context of a majority Sunni Indonesia.⁵ The Ahmadiyya has been present in the country since

¹ Suratno Suratno. "Ideology and identity transformation in the deradicalization of Muslim extremists in Indonesia." *IJoReSH: Indonesian Journal of Religion, Spirituality, and Humanity*, 1, no. 2 (2022): 189-214.

² Muhammad Nursyamsi, "Ini Duduk Perkara Insiden Ahmadiyya di Lombok Timur". *Republika*, May 22, 2018. <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/dunia-islam/islam-nusantara/18/05/22/p931x2396-ini-duduk-perkara-insiden-ahmadiyya-di-lombok-timur> (accessed October 17, 2023).

³ Azyumardi Azra, "Pengantar", in: Iskandar Zulkarnain (ed.). *Gerakan Ahmadiyya di Indonesia*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2005)

⁴ Iskandar Zulkarnain, *Gerakan Ahmadiyya di Indonesia*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2005), 5.

⁵ Melisa Crouch, "Indonesia, Militant Islam, and Ahmadiyah: Origins and implications." *ARC Federation Fellowship, 'Islam, Shariah and Governance' Background Paper Series*, 4 (2009).

the 1920s. The Lahore Ahmadiyya branch in Indonesia established the 'Indonesian Ahmadiyya Movement' (Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia, GAI). The Qadiani branch organized itself into the 'Indonesian Ahmadiyya Community' (Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia, JAI). The 'Indonesian Ahmadiyya Community' is active mainly in West Java. The two factions have successfully attracted more than 400,000 followers across the country.⁶

Some studies investigate Ahmadiyya in Indonesia by emphasizing its varied aspects. Mudzakir,⁷ for example, examines the marginalization of the Ahmadiyya Community as a minority group, especially in the era of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's administration. This 'minimization' occurred because of two factors: (a) the strengthening of radical Islamic groups and (b) the lack of clarity in the administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (r. 2004-2014). In a similar tone, Nastiti⁸ pays attention to the discursive construction of the Muslim majority that attributes the Ahmadiyya as the 'other' and consequently leads to the 'minorisation' of the Ahmadiyya.

Rahman⁹ examines state policy that confines the religious freedom of the Ahmadiyya communities in Indonesia and Pakistan. She argues that this restriction is not the consequence of the institutionalization of Islam in the state but rather constitutes the political survival strategy of the state in compromising with the conservative Muslim actors.

Burhani¹⁰ scrutinizes the status of the 'deviant sect' in Islam, especially Ahmadiyya, from the perspective of Islamic law and the

⁶ Saskia Schaefer, "Renegotiating Indonesian secularism through debates on Ahmadiyya and Shia," *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 41, no. 4 (2015): 497-508.

⁷ Amin Mudzakkir, "Minoritisasi Ahmadiyah di Indonesia." *Masyarakat Indonesia* 37, no. 2 (2011): 1-24.

⁸ Aulia Nastiti, "Discursive Construction of Religious Minority: Minoritization of Ahmadiyya in Indonesia". *Deutsches Asienforschungszentrum Asian Series Commentaries*, 19 (2014): 1-16.

⁹ Fatima Z. Rahman, "State restrictions on the Ahmadiyya sect in Indonesia and Pakistan: Islam or political survival?" *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 49, no. 3 (2014), 408-422.

¹⁰ Ahmad N. Burhani, "Hating the Ahmadiyya: the place of heretics in contemporary Indonesian Muslim society". *Contemporary Islam*, 8, no. 2 (2014): 133-152. See also Cahyo Pamungkas, "Social Resilience of Minority Group: Study

treatment of Ahmadiyya as a 'deviant sect' in Muslim societies. Junaedi and Sukmono (2016) examine the strategy of the Ahmadiyya Community in Tawang Mangu, Karanganyar, Central Java, in response to the attack on the Ahmadiyya, which peaked especially in the Post-Suharto Indonesia. The strategy that the Ahmadiyya Community undertook in Tawang Mangu is integration, merging themselves with the local community to live peacefully.

Conley¹¹ examines varied strategies the Ahmadis took that "enable them to attain psychological empowerment". These strategies are epitomized under the subsequent rubrics: 'rationalizing oppression,' 'ideological maneuvering,' 'fortitude through faith and spirituality,' 'acts of resistance,' 'harmonizing identity,' and 'satisfying the need to belong.' These strategies contribute to the Ahmadis' ability to make sense of, negotiate, respond to, and resist hegemonic forces emotionally, socially, and spiritually.

Regus examines the challenges of human rights culture in Indonesia by examining Ahmadiyya's experience.¹² Yosarie, Insiyah, and Buntara highlight discriminative legal products and their impact on the justification of persecution towards the members of the Ahmadiyya in Indonesia.¹³ Irawan and Adnan investigate the current discourse on religious discrimination towards the Ahmadiyya in Indonesia.¹⁴ Burhani unravels the

of Syiah Refugees in Sidoarjo and Ahmadiyah Refugess in Mataram", *Uloomuna* 19, no. 2 (2015): 251-278

¹¹ Aleah Connley, "Understanding the oppressed: A study of the Ahmadiyah and their strategies for overcoming adversity in contemporary Indonesia". *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 35, no. 1 (2016), 29-58

¹² Max Regus, *Human Rights Culture in Indonesia: Attacks on the Ahmadiyya Minority Group*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021.

¹³ Ikhsan Yosarie, Sayyidatul Insiyah, and Syera Anggreini Buntara. *Inklusi Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia dalam Keindonesiaan*. Jakarta: Pustaka Masyarakat Setara, 2021.

¹⁴ Andi Muhammad Irawan and Zifirdaus Adnan. "The Ahmadiyya, Blasphemy and Religious Freedom: The Institutional Discourse Analysis of Religious Discrimination in Indonesia." *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 18, no. 1 (2021): 79-102.

tendency among conservative Muslim groups who justify violence towards the Ahmadiyya as an excellent religious duty.¹⁵

The present study strives to investigate the dynamics of the Ahmadiyya and their aspiration to live in harmony with other faith communities in Indonesia. It highlights the conception and agency of the Ahmadiyya community related to religious harmony and socio-political and socio-religious factors that enable peaceful coexistence with other faith communities.

The subject of this study is the dynamics of the Ahmadiyya community in Malang, East Java. Different from most parts of the country, the Ahmadi in Malang can live in harmony with other faith communities, most notably with Sunni Muslims, without experiencing any persecution.¹⁶ Malang is home to mainstream Sunni Muslims, most specifically the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah. The Ahmadiyya in Salatiga, Central Java, and Manado, North Sulawesi, also live harmoniously with other faith communities. However, it is worth remembering that many of the population in these two cities are Christians. The clashes are not between the Ahmadiyya and Christianity but between the Ahmadiyya and Sunni Muslims.

The authors employ documentation, interviews, and participant observation when collecting the data. For the sake of security, the names of the respondents in this paper are pseudonyms. The authors employ qualitative content analysis to analyze the data.

This writing will also enrich research on the Ahmadiyah community in Indonesia concerning its existence and its exemplification of religious harmony within Islamic communities in Indonesia.¹⁷ It is well-known that Indonesia's concept of

¹⁵ Ahmad Najib Burhani, "It is a Jihad": Justifying Violence towards the Ahmadiyya in Indonesia." *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and-National Studies of Southeast Asia* 9, no. 1 (2021): 99-112.

¹⁶ Fadil, Pepy Marwinata, Shofiatul Jannah and A. Matluf Siroj, "Religious moderation and Family Resilience in the City of Malang, Indonesia: The Historical Perspective of Islamic Law" *Samarah Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 9, no. 1 (2024): 236-256

¹⁷ See for example Anzar Abdullah, Andi Alim, Fauza Andriyadi and Muhammad Alqadri Burga, "Application of Multicultural Education in Strengthening Community Solidarity in Indonesia", *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 11,

religious harmony consists of three segments. First is harmony within internal religious communities, second is inter-religious harmony among different religious communities, and third is harmony among religious communities with the state.¹⁸ The dynamics of the Ahmadiyya in their aspiration to live in harmony with other faith communities in Indonesia, as portrayed in this article, will strengthen those three segments of religious harmony in Indonesia.

The dynamics of the Ahmadiyya in their aspiration to live in harmony with other faith communities in Indonesia, as it is portrayed in this article, will first indicate the contrary situation compared to what happened in several regions in Indonesia, such as in Cikeusik Pandeglang, Banten, Depok and Bogor in West Java, Lombok Timur, West Nusa Tenggara, Kendal in Middle Java, Bangka in Bangka Belitung and others.¹⁹ At the same time, this harmony will enrich the example and even best practices for internal and inter-religious relations in Indonesia, which are the first and second segments of religious harmony.

At first, the authors discuss the presence of the Ahmadiyya in Indonesia by specifically underlining the experiences of coexistence and persecution. The authors discuss the challenges facing the Ahmadiyya in Malang and how the Ahmadis play their agency in meeting these challenges. The actors and institutions that support the peaceful coexistence between the Ahmadiyya and other faith communities will also be dealt with.

The Ahmadiyya in Indonesia: From Coexistence to Persecution.

Minority, in the words of van der Haven, is conceived as a group, numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State,

no. 3 (2023): 1173-1198 and Muhlisin, Nur Kholis and Juwita Rini "Navigating the Nexus: Government Policies in Cultivating Religious Moderation within State Islamic Higher Education", *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 11, no. 1 (2023): 207-246.

¹⁸ Imam Syaukani, *Kompilasi Kebijakan Dan Peraturan Perundang-Undangan Kerukunan Umat Beragama*, Jakarta, Puslitbang, 2008, p. 5., Ridwan Lubis, *Cetak Biru Peran Agama*, Jakarta, Puslitbang, 2005 p. 7-8

¹⁹ See: <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20210908142815-20-691467/deretan-penyerangan-terhadap-ahmadiyah-cikeusik-hingga-ntb/2> (accessed March 14, 2024).

in a non-dominant position, whose members—being nationals of the State—possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language.²⁰

In contexts where homogeneity is emphasized, such as nationalist discourse, minorities can also be perceived as potentially disruptive and dangerous and feature prominently in conspiracy narratives. Similarly, the fear of perceived threat implies dichotomized views about "good" and "bad" minorities.²¹

The Ahmadiyya came to the Indonesian archipelago in the 1920s. This community had lived peacefully with other faith communities, including the Sunni Muslims. It was mainly after the fall of Suharto in 1998 that the treatment of the Ahmadiyya changed. The regimes in the Post-Suharto era are, to some extent, weak and prone to be dictated by the conservative Muslim groups, most specifically by issuing regulations that run in contrast with religious pluralism.²²

The Majelis Ulama Indonesia is convinced that the teachings of the Ahmadiyya are deviating from the orthodox teachings of Islam. For them, Ahmadiyya is a deceptive movement that triggers confusion and disunity among Muslims. In contrast to that, the more progressive Muslim groups argue that the state must safeguard the Ahmadiyya followers due to the consideration that every citizen is entitled to be protected under the country's constitution. For them, the Ahmadiyya is a legal entity, based on the decree of Minister of Justice Number JA 5/23/13, dated 13 March 1953, and was also acknowledged as a social organization

²⁰ Alexander van der Haven, Michael Stausberg, and Erica Baffelli, "Religious Minorities: conceptual perspectives." (2023).

²¹ Nazila Ghanea, "Are religious minorities minorities?." *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* 1, no. 1 (2012): 57-79.

²² Ahmad N. Burhani, "Treating minorities with fatwas: a study of the Ahmadiyya community in Indonesia". *Contemporary Islam*, 8, no. 3 (2014): 285-301.

based on the decision of the Directorate for the Relation of Political Institutions Number 75//D.I./VI/2003.²³

In 1980, the Majelis Ulama Indonesia issued a legal opinion (*fatwa*) that denounced the Ahmadiyya as a deviant sect, in line with a *fatwa* issued by *Rabita al-salam al-Islami* (Muslim World League). Nevertheless, the MUI and its *fatwa* attracted little attention from the Muslim community and government. In 2015, the MUI issued a similar *fatwa* against the Ahmadiyya amidst the ongoing attack on the Ahmadis in some parts of the country. This latter *fatwa* was employed by some politicians and some groups within the Muslim community to justify or excuse violence against the Ahmadis.²⁴

In the eyes of many Sunni Muslims, acknowledging Ahmadiyya's 'right to exist' implies recognizing its claim that Muhammad was not the final prophet. This claim is seen as denting the Islamic faith. For them, Ahmadiyya is distinct from other faith minorities in the country in the sense that their beliefs are incompatible with those of mainstream Muslims.²⁵

Throughout history, we have witnessed clashes between varied faith traditions and within a single faith tradition. Animosity within a single faith tradition is often more hostile than that with other traditions.²⁶ This can be observed, for instance, in the case of tension between Sunnism and Shiism and the case of a clash between Ahmadiyya and Sunnism.²⁷

Present-day Indonesia witnessed cases of violence against the Ahmadiyya. It is worth remarking that the number of assaults

²³ Mohamad Atqa, "Religious expression in Indonesia—A sociological study of Ahmadiyya movement". *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 1, no. 6 (2010): 19-31. See also: Munasir Sidik. *Dasar-dasar Hukum dan Legalitas JAI*. Malang: Neratja Press, 2007.

²⁴ Schaefer, "Renegotiating Indonesian secularism through debates on Ahmadiyya and Shia", 497-508.

²⁵ Jacqueline Hicks, "Heresy and authority: understanding the turn against Ahmadiyah in Indonesia". *South East Asia Research*, 22, no. 3 (2014): 321-339

²⁶ Sri Suwartini and Weston Weston. "Multicultural and multidisciplinary Islamic religious education and its significance for nurturing religious moderatism". *IJoReSH: Indonesian Journal of Religion, Spirituality, and Humanity*, 1, no. 1 (2022): 76-98.

²⁷ Burhani, "Treating minorities with fatwas", 286.

against this community is much higher than those on other religious minorities in the country. This is due to the liminal status of Ahmadiyya, which lies in an unclear zone between Muslims and non-Muslims. This position makes them susceptible to maltreatment. Their rights as Muslims have been withdrawn, while their rights as non-Muslims remain postponed until they pronounce their disassociation with Islam. In their relation to the Ahmadiyya, the mainstream Sunni Muslims do not implement the principle of 'respect for the enemy' and tolerance as they do in their relationship with non-Muslims. For some Sunni Muslims, converting to Ahmadiyya is worse than converting to Christianity or other religions.²⁸

The Ahmadis have often become the target of violence, most notably from the mainstream Sunni Muslims. Despite their position as 'victims', they are often blamed for the occurrence of the violence. There are some reasons why Ahmadiyya is blamed. *First*, Ahmadiyya is designated as heterodox so that it could blemish the religious teachings of mainstream Sunni Muslims. The Ahmadiyya is perceived as an enemy from within, which is more perilous than that from without, namely non-Muslims. *Second*, the existence of Ahmadiyya is considered a menace to the majority group, namely the Sunni Muslims. The Ahmadis, as victims, are often blamed by the dominant majority because of the Ahmadiyya's negative features.²⁹

The narratives of heresy on the Ahmadiyya are not only endorsed by leading personages (such as religious clerics) but also by authorized institutions like the MUI and the Coordinating Body for Spiritual Beliefs in Society (Bakorpakem). The stigmatization of this community is further reinforced by negative reportage in

²⁸ Ahmad N. Burhani, "Hating the Ahmadiyya: the place of heretics in contemporary Indonesian Muslim society", *Contemporary Islam*, 8, no. 2 (2014): 135-140.

²⁹ Idhamsyah E Putra, Peter Holtz, & Any Rufaedah, "Who is to blame, the victims or the perpetrators? A study to understand a series of violence targeting the accused heretic group Ahmadiyya", *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 10, no. 2 (2018), 166-173

mainstream media. Belonging to this community thus afflicts its members.³⁰

There is an indication that the government is inclined to accommodate the voices of conservative Muslim groups. This can be seen, for instance, from the emergence of the 'Joint Ministerial Decree' (SKB) from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Office of Attorney General about the Ahmadiyya, which was issued in June 2008. This decree only prohibits the Ahmadis from expressing their deviant teachings and disseminating their teachings and beliefs. Nevertheless, this decree stimulates the emergence of other regulations at the level of districts and provinces, with stricter restrictions on the activities of the Ahmadiyya.³¹ The Ahmadis feel the effect of the 'Joint Ministerial Decree'. They realize that since the issuing of this decree, they have been gradually handled as second-class citizens by the Sunni Muslims and state apparatuses.³²

This 'Joint Ministerial Decree' was preceded by persecution and provocative public talks by conservative Muslim leaders. These speeches were employed to pressure the government to prohibit the Ahmadiyya community. In early 2008, for instance, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) organized a gathering in which its secretary-general, Sobri Lubis, recommended Muslims kill the Ahmadis.³³

There is also doubt about the state's neutrality concerning religion. This can be seen, for instance, from the standpoint of the Ministry of Religious Affairs under Suryadharma Ali (r. 2009-2014). Ali called for the banning of Ahmadiyya. He exhorted the conversion of the Ahmadiyya into Islam.³⁴

In the Suharto era, the state devised a hierarchical mechanism that proactively dominated identity, religious, and organizational

³⁰ Connley, "Understanding the oppressed", 29-58.

³¹ Burhani, "Hating the Ahmadiyya", 143.

³² Connley, "Understanding the oppressed", 30-33.

³³ Leena Avonius, "The Ahmadiyya & Freedom of Religion in Indonesia", *ISIM Review*, 22, no. 1 (2008): 48-49.

³⁴ Schaefer, "Renegotiating Indonesian secularism", 97-508

issues.³⁵ Even though this was not always effective and had unintended consequences,³⁶ The legislation implies the pragmatic character of Indonesia during the regime of Suharto, namely maintaining national unity. This is distinct from the condition in the post-Suharto era, where the state has become reactive to religious issues. This can be seen among others in the Ahmadiyya paradox, where the state reacts *post hoc* to intra-religious clashes.³⁷

The Ahmadiyya paradox raises problems in the categorization of religion in Indonesia. Ahmadis are Indonesian citizens (as indicated by their National Identity Card) and possess sanctioned documentation about their Islamic identity. However, the ensuing law is specific, namely the Joint Ministerial Decree, which states that Ahmadiyya is not a part of Islam. Hence, the employment of religious categories is fluidic, problematic, and vague, as is the notion of the Indonesian nation.³⁸

In this vein, we may observe the transformation of socio-religious and socio-political structures in response to the existence of the Ahmadiyya communities in the country. From the 1920s onwards, the Ahmadis in the Indonesian archipelago enjoyed peaceful coexistence with other faith communities. After the independence of Indonesia in 1945, the Ahmadiyya communities, however, have not been much involved in the project of Indonesian nation-building. This project has been ventured by the dominant societal cultures, most notably the Sunni majority. It is worth mentioning that many conservative groups in the country claim themselves to be Sunni Muslims due to their struggles for socio-political power and religious authority in the country. The

³⁵ Dyah Tjaturrini, Chendy Arieschanty, Tri Asiati, Henggar Prasetyowati, and Zuyinatul Isro, "Calengsai and the intimate communications among faith believers," *IJoReSH: Indonesian Journal of Religion, Spirituality, and Humanity*, 1, no. 2 (2022): 215-240.

³⁶ Arifki Budia Warman, Dodon Alfiander, Ashabul Fadhli, and Wardatun Nabilah. "From Communal to Individual: Shifting Authorities of Family Dispute Resolution in Minangkabau Society," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan*, 23, no. 2 (2023): 161-183.

³⁷ Daniel C. Bottomley, "The KTP Quandary: Islam, the Ahmadiyya, and the Reproduction of Indonesian Nationalism". *Contemporary Islam*, 9, no. 1 (2015): 1-16.

³⁸ Bottomley, "The KTP Quandary", 1-16.

Ahmadiyya has been labeled as a deviant sect by the Sunni majority in the country. This labeling has implications not only in theological domains but also in civic-political realms, namely excluding their potential participation in nation-building in the country.

A Brief Overview of the Ahmadiyya Community in Malang, East Java

The Ahmadiyya communities in the Regency Malang, the City of Malang, and the City of Batu organize themselves into a branch of the Ahmadiyya, known as the Great Malang (*Malang Raya*). The Ahmadis in Bangil once joined the Great Malang region but now constituted an independent branch. The active members of the Ahmadis in this area are around ten families, while its overall members are around one hundred families.³⁹

The Ahmadiyya members in East Java are clustered in three regions. Each region holds its monthly meetings (*jalsa*). The Friday prayer for the Ahmadis in Malang is held at the secretariat and the house of WS. Friday sermons in the Ahmadiyya congregation usually consist of the recitation of the Ahmadiyya caliphates. The preachers sometimes add a commentary or explanation to the caliphate's sermon text. We observed this tendency when we participated in the Ahmadiyya Friday Prayer, which was held at the house of WS.

The number of students and pupils who adhere to the Ahmadi teaching is fluctuating since they come and go after they finish their studies and school. We notice that some senior high school pupils also participate in the activities of the Ahmadiyya in Malang. We asked one of these pupils, and he responded that he was an active member of the Ahmadiyya since he was a junior high school pupil in Kuningan, West Java.

The preacher (*muballigh*) of the Ahmadiyya in Malang is MAS, who hails from Kuningan, West Java. Before serving as a preacher in Malang, he served in Banyumas, Central Java, and Karanganyar, Central Java.⁴⁰ This allows us to conclude that

³⁹ Interview with WS, February 11, 2023.

⁴⁰ Interview with MAS, February 12, 2023.

Ahmadiyya in Malang has an intense connection with the Ahmadiyya in Kuningan (where many followers live).

Another member of the Ahmadiyya board members in Malang is AH. Currently, he serves as the head of the *Tarbiyya wa Salim* department (education and teaching). He is responsible for organizing teachings and worship at the organization. He stated that his ancestors came from India. His grandparents lived in Kuningan. For him, adhering to the Ahmadiyya is like preserving the ancestor's heritage. The chairman of the Ahmadiyya congregation in Malang is FH.

The Challenges towards the Ahmadiyya in Malang, East Java

Once, one Malang officer, Dwi Rahayu, who serves as the Head of the Legal Section of the City of Malang, proposed that all village leaders should report to the police if any members in their respective adhere to the Ahmadiyya. This officer took this arrangement as a response to the Decree of the Governor of East Java, which banned the activities of the Ahmadiyya.⁴¹

Rahayu further explained that this arrangement was taken to socialize data collection and monitor the activities of Ahmadiyya followers. In addition, it also helps minimize the potential for horizontal conflicts between the local community and the Ahmadiyya followers after the issuance of the East Java Governor's Decree on the prohibition of Ahmadiyya activities in the province. Rahayu requested that the village leaders conduct socialization with each neighborhood unit (*Rukun Tetangga*, RT) and community unit (*Rukun Warga*, RW) in their respective regions. She suggested that if they witness a signboard or everything that indicates the identity of the Ahmadiyya, they should immediately report it to the authorities.⁴²

In response to this policy, one of the senior Ahmadi members in Malang, WS, stated that the Ahmadi members in Malang never live in isolation; they do not conceal their identities. He

⁴¹ Didi Purwadi, "Lurah Kota Malang Wajib Data Jamaah Ahmadiyah. *Republika*, March 2, 2011. <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/breaking-news/nusantara/11/03/02/166904-lurah-kota-malang-wajib-data-jamaah-ahmadiyah> (accessed April 20, 2023).

⁴² Didi Purwadi, "Lurah Kota Malang Wajib Data Jamaah Ahmadiyah".

approached the mayor of Malang about this restriction and succeeded in stopping this policy due to his close contact with the mayor of Malang.⁴³ In this regard, we may see that such a minority group as the Ahmadiyya need strong personages that can help the group sustain and grow. These strong personages are also needed to protect the group from discrimination. These personages can play their agency in negotiating with the dominant group in the society or state or local government apparatuses.

These personages can negotiate their existence in their social milieu in conformity with the interactions they intertwined in coming across with others. These relations imply a process of compromise and negotiation. It is worth remarking that although the negotiation process is not always equal (because of the varying power status of these personages), all involved have a degree of self-determination.⁴⁴

WS is an example of these strong personages within the Ahmadiyya in Malang. He obtained his doctorate at a state university. Currently, he serves as a faculty member at a private university in East Java. The Friday prayer for the members of the Ahmadiyya in Malang is held at his house, showing his standing among the Ahmadiyya followers in Malang. At the organizational structure of the Ahmadiyya, he serves as the chairman for Anshor (Wing Organisation for Ahmadiyya followers older than forty). He adhered to the Ahmadi teaching in 1987, the first year of his bachelor's study.

On February 23, 2011, the officer of Malang Dwi Rahayu said. However, the opposition towards Ahmadiyya is increasing in the country; the Malang City Government is not interested in proposing regional regulations on the prohibition of Ahmadiyya. She argued that religiosity in the city of Malang is considered very

⁴³ Interview with WS, February 10, 2023

⁴⁴ Vicky Plows, "Conflict and coexistence: challenging interactions, expressions of agency and ways of relating in work with young people in the Minority World". *Children's Geographies*, 10, no. 3 (2012): 279-291.

conducive and does not require regulation on the prohibition of Ahmadiyya.⁴⁵

Rahayu further argued that religion is a sensitive issue. Even if the central government made legislation on the prohibition of Ahmadiyya, we were not necessarily involved in making the same regulation. She was worried that if he made a Regional Regulation that was concerned with the prohibition on Ahmadiyya, it would instigate a lousy atmosphere. For example, ordinary people could argue with the Regional Regulation and act arbitrarily. This, of course, could trigger a new problem.⁴⁶

Once, a seminar on the Ahmadiyya was held at a private university in East Java. Several students demonstrated, asking to cancel the seminar; nevertheless, WS, as the Vice-Rector of Student Affairs, insisted on continuing the seminar, and it succeeded. After the seminar, he realized that a person had provoked the students, and this figure apologized to WS.

The Ahmadiyya community in Malang realizes that the leaders of other Muslim organizations prevent their members from joining the Ahmadiyya. This can be seen, for instance, from the leaders of the Nahdlatul Ulama's positions towards the proselytization of the Ahmadiyya. The Ahmadis in Malang perceive these viewpoints not as offending the Ahmadiyya but as theological prevention of other Muslim organizations on the faith of others.⁴⁷ In this regard, the theological standpoint does not necessarily correspond to the civic-political standpoint.

WS highlighted the position of another figure in Malang, namely Bambang Noorsena (b. 1964). Noorsena serves as the politician of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (*PDIP*) and the founder of 'The Institute for Syriac Culture Studies'. He is known as an activist for religious freedom and interfaith dialogue; accordingly, he also takes an active part in defending the civil rights of the Ahmadiyya. Nevertheless, as an Orthodox Christian,

⁴⁵ Ivan Setyadhi, "Kota Malang tak Berminat Larang Ahmadiyya", *Inilah.com*, March 2, 2011. <https://ekonomi.inilah.com/read/detail/1265182/kota-malang-tak-berminat-larang-ahmadiyya> (accessed October 12, 2023).

⁴⁶ Setyadhi, "Kota Malang tak Berminat Larang Ahmadiyya".

⁴⁷ Interview with WS, February 11, 2023.

he opposes Ahmadiyya's viewpoint on the position of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the Messiah.

Ahmadiyya, agency and civic engagement

Ahmadiyya is known for its motto: love all, hatred for none. This compassion is accordingly at the very bottom of the Ahmadi teachings. One of the Ahmadi personages explicates that 'Love for all, hatred for none' is an idea of world peace with a zero hatred approach that builds a noble and civilized life. This idea is very oriented towards positive values.⁴⁸

The compassionate spirit is also observable from the commitment of the Ahmadiyya members, which reads as follows: (a) staying away from polytheism; (b) staying away from adultery, dishonesty, and rebellion; (c) performing five-a-day prayer; (d) not hurting anyone from God's creatures, most notably the Muslims; (e) surrender to God's will; (f) keeping away from desires; (g) keeping away from arrogance; (h) glorifying Islam; (i) offering help to all of God's creatures; and (j) maintaining a good relationship with the Messiah.⁴⁹ As a consequence, the Ahmadis do not retaliate against the persons who perpetrated violence against them. They would instead pray to God and seek civic and legal protection.

In line with this, Conley⁵⁰ stresses that this teaching represents the "emotional and spiritual basis of the Ahmadis' capability" to admit the repressive insolences of others, to absolve intolerance, and to go beyond these bad experiences. For Ahmadis, demonstrating 'Love for all' entails them to "accept their oppressors, and to strive for peaceful coexistence, regardless of their treatment by others".

The Ahmadiyya personages accept the notion of *jihad* in Islam, but they understand the concept differently. For them, *jihad* in the sense of warfare (*qital*) is no longer obligatory after the coming of the Messiah, namely Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908), known as

⁴⁸ Interview with MAS, February 12, 2023.

⁴⁹ G. Ahmad, "Love for All Hatred for None Kunci Perdamaian Dunia". *Warta Ahmadiyah*, September 21, 2018. <https://wartaahmadiyah.org/love-for-all-hatred-for-none-kunci-perdamaian-dunia.html> (accessed November 11, 2023).

⁵⁰ Connley, "Understanding the oppressed", 29-58.

the founder of the Ahmadiyya. This standpoint is based on the Qur'anic verse "hatta tadha'a al-harb aware-ha" (until the war lays down its burdens) (Q.S. Muhammad: 4). This verse is interpreted as "until the advent of the promised Messiah."⁵¹ For the Ahmadiyya, peaceful jihad is relevant in the present-day context, as it involves composing books (*jihad bi al-qalam*) and struggling against human desires (*jihad al-nafs*).⁵²

The Ahmadis read the Islamic law (*fiqh*) according to the four classical schools of Islamic law, although at the practical level, they refer to the current caliphate of the Ahmadiyya. Ahmadiyya's teachings on peace and tolerance are observable in the book *World Crisis and Pathway to Peace* by Mirza Masroor Ahmad (b. 1950).⁵³

The problem of discrimination towards Ahmadiyya as a minority does not necessarily correlate with the tolerant teachings of the community concerned. It would be more connected to the dominant social or religious group in which the Ahmadiyya followers live. In general, the Sunni Muslim majority in Malang is relatively tolerant towards other religious groups, including minority Islamic groups within Islam.⁵⁴ In Malang, many churches exist that are, in some ways, comparable to Salatiga, Central Java.⁵⁵ Such a milieu is conducive to the peaceful coexistence between the Ahmadiyya and the rest of the faith communities in Malang.⁵⁶

Another critical factor for the harmonious relationship between the Ahmadiyya and other communities lies in the Ahmadiyya's capacity to socialize with their local community. MAS exemplified this strategy as a preacher in Tawang Mangu, Karanganyar. He socialized with the local people, including thugs.

⁵¹ Ahmad, "Love for All Hatred for None Kunci Perdamaian Dunia".

⁵² Andi M. Irawan, "Ahmadiyya Religious Sect in the International World and Indonesia: The Establishment, Belief, and the Controversy". *Australian Folklore*, 29 (2014): 23-37.

⁵³ Interview with MAS, February 12, 2023.

⁵⁴ Interview with HA, February 9, 2023.

⁵⁵ Interview with WS, February 11, 2023.

⁵⁶ See also Erfaniah Zuhriah, Erik Sabti Rahmawati, Melinda Aprilyanti, Umi Chaidaroh and Mufidah Ch, "Childfree, the Digital Era, and Islamic Law: Views of Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and Gender Activitists in Malang, Indonesia, *Samarah Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 7, no. 3 (2023): 1601-1626.

Once, the police prohibited a meeting of the Ahmadiyya in Tawang Mangu, but the local people supported the meeting. He was astonished at that time that the head of the District of Tawang Mangu also allowed the meeting.⁵⁷

During his service in Malang, MAS also socialized with local people, especially in their neighborhoods. He proposed to the neighborhood leader that his house could serve as the neighborhood's pioneer of 'Reading Corner'. The neighborhood people know that MAS's house is Ahmadiyya's secretariat, but they are not disturbed by this organization.

The Ahmadiyya personages state that, in the civic-political domain, they always support the legitimate government in Indonesia. This is regardless of the religion of the state leaders, either Muslims or non-Muslims. If the state cannot guarantee the security of Ahmadiyya followers, they generally prefer to move their homes. The Ahmadis assert they will not oppose the state but struggle for their constitutional rights through applicable legal procedures. One example of regulations that the Ahmadis highlighted concerns the Joint Ministerial Decree, which constrains the dissemination of Ahmadiyya teachings. The Ahmadiyya community itself is trying to struggle to revoke this legal product, which is considered discriminatory. One of the Ahmadiyya personages explicates that the worry of the dissemination of the Ahmadi teachings is something excessive, especially if it leads to violence. He argues that human efforts cannot hinder any religion revealed by God.⁵⁸

One of the Ahmadiyya leaders in Malang said, "Many people misinterpret this decree. It is as if this decree could justify dissolving us. If our teachings are wrong, they will surely be destroyed by themselves. However, so far, I have seen not a setback but a rapid increase in several European and American countries". He said, "We do not demand the elimination of the MUI's *fatwa* or the joint-ministerial decree. It is precisely other institutions that help us to demand the abolition of the *fatwa* and the decree. Our effort is to do 'smooth resistance'. We fight with

⁵⁷ Interview with MAS, February 12, 2023.

⁵⁸ Munir Yusuf, *Ahmadiyya Menggugat*. Malang: Neratja Press, 2011, 9.

our attitudes and behaviors. Let people see and judge us for what some people say".⁵⁹

In 2008, we witnessed the Joint Ministerial Decree Number 3 issuance on the Ahmadiyya. One of the points of the Decree reads that if Ahmadiyya still maintains to be part of Islam, then it must stop all deviant worship activities. The Ahmadiyya Congregation in Malang continued to carry out worship activities as usual without being affected by the decree. The chairman of the Ahmadiyya in Malang argued that we must continue to perform five times-a-day prayers. If we do not perform prayers, we will be sinful. We also continue performing fasting. We perform these activities personally and secretly so they do not contain any element of proselytizing others.⁶⁰

Actors and Institutions that Support the Ahmadiyya

Some personages within the Ahmadiyya explained that they also cooperate intensely with the 'Gusdurian community'.⁶¹ The Gusdurian community refers to the association that involves individuals, communities, and institutions that consider themselves as the disciples, admirers, and followers of Abdurrahman Wahid's (Gus Dur) ideas and activism. Gus Dur's commitment is to sustaining humanity and defending the oppressed minority. This kind of commitment inspires the Gusdurian community throughout the country, including Malang. One of these forms of cooperation was a discussion session held by the Gusdurian community in Malang cooperation with the Ahmadiyya, titled "Ahmadiyya dan Keindonesiaan" (The Ahmadiyya and Indonesian nationhood).⁶²

⁵⁹ Hikmatul Ula et al. "Ahmadiyya Melawan SKB 3 Menteri dan Fatwa MUI". *Pusat Pengembangan Hak Asasi Manusia dan Demokrasi*, March 12, 2015. <http://pphd.hukum.ub.ac.id/2015/12/03/ahmadiyah-melawan-skb-3-menteri-dan-fatwa-mui/> (accessed October 22, 2023).

⁶⁰ Ahmad Ado, "Jemaah Ahmadiyya tetap Beraktivitas". *Liputan 6*, March 2, 2011. <https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/322450/jemaah-ahmadiyah-tetap-beraktivitas> (accessed April 7, 2023).

⁶¹ Interview with WS, February 11, 2023.

⁶² Arasy Pradana, "Ahmadiyya Kami Taati Pemerintah Indonesia Asal". *Malang Times*, February 24.

During a discussion at the Gusdurian community, one of the speakers, Aminullah Yusuf, specifically told the drama about the sealing of the mosque, which was founded by the Ahmadiyya community in Tulungagung, East Java. It is worth mentioning that Yusuf is the coach of the Ahmadiyya community in Tulung Agung. Yusuf explained further that the Ahmadiyya community faces intimidation and is designated as a banned organization, even though we are a legal entity in Indonesia (Pradana 2016a). Yusuf further explained that there is no difference between the pillars of Islam and those of the Ahmadiyya. The difference lies in the belief in the Messiah, which, for the Ahmadiyya, came in the form of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The Ahmadiyya teachings infiltrated Indonesia along with the shift of some Islamic studies destinations to India, the origin of Ahmadiyya teachings. The teachings of the Ahmadiyya are attractive because of its success in Islamising Britain.⁶³

Yusuf's talk was followed by Muhammad Mahfur, one of the founders of the Gusdurian community in Malang, who also taught psychology at the State Islamic University in Malang. Mahfur pointed out that the birth of Ahmadiyya was related to the politics of colonialism. What is interesting for him is the peaceful struggle, which is designated as the highest level of *jihad* according to the Ahmadiyya members, including the facing against British colonialism.⁶⁴

MAS mentions explicitly one of the personages of the Gusdurian Community, namely Zuhairi Misrawi (b. 1977). MAS highly appreciates this intellectual activist to Misrawi's broader knowledge of Islamic intellectual heritage, including the intellectual heritage of the Ahmadiyyah. MAS explains that Misrawi masters the significant works of the Ahmadiyya leaders

<https://www.malangtimes.com/baca/10377/20160224/230033/ahmadiyya-kami-taati-pemerintah-indonesia-asal/> (accessed October 19, 2023).

⁶³ Arasy Pradana, . "JAI JATIM: Rukun Iman dan Islam Ahmadiyya Sama". *Jatim Times*, February 24, 2016. <https://www.jatimtimes.com/baca/136699/20160224/224434/jai-jatim-rukun-iman-dan-islam-ahmadiyya-sama/> (accessed October 22, 2023).

⁶⁴ Pradana, . "JAI JATIM: Rukun Iman dan Islam Ahmadiyya Sama".

and has learned more about the Ahmadiyya teachings than the average Ahmadiyya preacher.⁶⁵

Misrawi belongs to moderate Muslim intellectuals who actively defend the rights of the Ahmadis. This can be observed, for instance, in his Tweets. One of these Tweets read, "Community service of the Indonesian Ahmadis for the country and humanity. The Ahmadiyya obtained the MURI record as the largest eye donor in Indonesia" (July 21, 2019). Another Tweet reads, "The Ahmadiyya can consistently plant "Love for All, Hatred for None" because the Ahmadiyya is not involved in practical politics. The Ahmadiyya consistently focuses its activities on the spiritual domain (October 28, 2019).

The Ahmadiyya highly esteem Gus Dur, who once served as the fourth president of Indonesia (r. 1999-2001), due to his commitment to humanity and multiculturalism. The minority groups in Indonesia, including the Ahmadiyya, appreciate Gus Dur's merits and activism in defending the rights of minorities.

This can be observed, for instance, from the participation of a significant number of Ahmadiyya members in the death anniversary of Gus Dur, which was held on January 21, 2014, at the Pesantren of Kyai Muslim Miftahul Huda, which is located at Siwatu, Watumalang, Wonosobo, Central Java. During this anniversary, inter-religious prayer and the inauguration of Gus Dur's library existed. Gus Dur's wife, Sinta Nuriyah Wahid,⁶⁶ came to this anniversary and gave a speech. Gus Dur's death anniversary was also attended by the Shiite community (IJABI), the adherent of Javanese mystical movements (*aliran kepercayaan*), Catholics, Christians, Confucians, Buddhists, and the Muslim students and leaders of the Nahdlatul Ulama. Gus Dur's death anniversary began with the recitation of *stigmata* (prayer of beseeching for help) and *tahlil* (prayer for the deceased), which the religious scholars of the Nahdlatul Ulama led. Sinta Nuriyah Wahid's speech followed these prayers. Sinta discussed "Gus Dur's

⁶⁵ Interview with MAS, February 12, 2023.

⁶⁶ Asfa Widiyanto, "Female Religious Authority, Religious Minority, and the Ahmadiyya: The Activism of Sinta Nuriyah Wahid." *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 9, no. 1 (2015), 1-24

Ideas on Pluralism and Developing the Future of Indonesia. She said that Indonesia is plural in terms of ethnicities and religions. Indonesia has to be united as one nation, which is an implementation of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). We shall live peacefully, respecting and loving each other. Sinta's talk was then followed by testimonies from some religious leaders (including the Ahmadiyya) on the ideas and activism of Gus Dur.⁶⁷

In 2016, the Gusdurian Community in Malang organized an activity called "Ramadan Peace Safari," which was held during the fasting month of Ramadan. They visited religious communities and institutions, such as Catholicism, the Pesantren Sabilurrosyad, Confucianism, Buddhism, the Ahmadiyya, and the Javanese Mystical Movement (*aliran kebatinan*). During the Ramadan Peace Safari, the Gusdurian Community strives to spread Gus Dur's visions and values, which include monotheism, humanity, justice, equality, liberation, brotherhood, simplicity, knighthood, and local wisdom. For them, these values can be celebrated and lived out by any person regardless of their religion and beliefs. Besides the Gusdurian Community, the Ahmadiyya Congregation in Malang also cooperates with the Communication Forum of Religious Community (FKUB). The Ahmadiyya is involved in the meetings and discussions held by this Forum.⁶⁸

MAS once participated in one discussion called the 'Reboan Youth Peace Building Forum'. This discussion session was held on March 14, 2018, in Malang and was explicitly concerned with the 'Questioning Religious Violence'. MAS gave a talk in this session, along with some Catholicism and Nahdlatul Ulama speakers. MAS suggested that the audience create harmony amidst diversity. He hoped such a session could be continuously held to foster tolerance and multiculturalism. He said, "If we are customized to live with differing opinions, we will have more tolerance."⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ahmad Salim, "Warga dan Pengurus Ahmadiyya Jateng Hadiri Haul Gus Dur". *Warta Ahmadiyya*, March 2, 2017. <http://warta-ahmadiyya.org/warga-dan-pengurus-ahmadiyya-jateng-hadiri-haul-gus-dur.html> (accessed April 2, 2023).

⁶⁸ Interview with AR, February 10, 2023.

⁶⁹ Ahmad Junianto, "Muballigh Jamaah Ahmadiyya Jadi Pembicara di Forum Reboan". *Swara Hati Rakyat*, March 11, 2018.

The Nahdlatul Ulama Regional Board in Malang Regency has also played an essential role in safeguarding the Ahmadiyya in this region. This board had taken necessary action to safeguard the Ahmadiyya congregation in Malang after the persecution of the Ahmadiyya members in Temanggung, Central Java, and Cikeusik, Pandeglang. The board cooperated with several elements in response, including the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) of Malang Regency and the Interfaith Communication Forum (FKAUB). This anticipation was carried out because, in the Malang Regency, there were also followers of the Ahmadiyya, although their numbers were not significant. Up to now, they do not create chaos in society. The board condemned the persecution and violence towards the Ahmadiyya since violence does not reflect the ideal teaching of Islam. Having different theologies does not necessarily mean allowing somebody to do violence to others.⁷⁰

One of the Ahmadiyya personages explained that some progressive Muslim intellectuals have done their best to defend the rights of the Ahmadiyya in Indonesia. He named, for instance, the late Djohan Effendy (1939-2017), who once served as the Minister of State Secretary (1999-2001). Effendy backed up the forums and seminars in Indonesia, which the international leaders of the Ahmadiyya attended.

Effendy was exposed to the Ahmadiyya teachings and literature while studying at the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Yogyakarta. His love for philosophy and Islamic thought drove him to read Ahmadiyya books. For him, Ahmadiyya's books are distinct from those of other Muslim organizations in Indonesia. He noticed that Ahmadiyya's books are more connected to modernity, not romanticism since the authors of these books lived and studied in Western countries. These books are addressed explicitly to Muslims and the general public in Europe. Effendy also took part in the Ahmadiyya meetings in Yogyakarta. He did

<https://www.swarahatirakyat.com/2018/03/mubaligh-jamaah-ahmadiyah-jadi.html> (accessed October 7, 2023)

⁷⁰ B. Bahruddin, "NU Antisipasi Konflik antar Umat Beragama terjadi di Malang". *Detik News*, March 5, 2011. <https://news.detik.com/berita-jawa-timur/d-1567617/nu-antisipasi-konflik-antar-umat-beragama-terjadi-di-malang> (accessed November 9, 2023)

not deny his adherence to the Ahmadiyya, although, in some ways, he opposed some doctrines of the Ahmadiyya, most specifically on the Messiah (AF 2009). Ahmadiyya's teaching accordingly shaped some features of Effendy's thought, particularly during his early intellectual career at the IAIN Yogyakarta. This background allows Effendy to communicate, socialize, and defend the Ahmadiyya later.

Interfaith and peace forums could also foster respect towards minorities, including the Ahmadiyya. This can be observed from the forum of "National Peace in Diversity: Celebrating Diversity, Building Peace", which was held from October 29 to November 1, 2015, in the City of Batu, East Java. Around fifty students from different faiths participate in this forum. Two Ahmadiyya students from the *Lajnah Imailah* (the organizational wing of the Ahmadiyya students) were involved in this forum. For these Ahmadiyya students, through this forum, the participants could learn from each other to minimize prejudices and misunderstandings about other faiths, specifically minority faiths, including the Ahmadiyya.⁷¹ Learning about other religions from untrustworthy sources would lead someone to prejudices.

Conclusion

In some ways, the narratives of heresy and the intensified discourse of joint ministerial decree threaten Ahmadiyya's sustainability. In response to these, the Ahmadiyya community in Malang does its best to maximize its agency. Some strong personages negotiate and bargain their existence in their social milieu with local government actors. Some other personages play their strategy to socialize with the local community, most notably to gain support and trust. The Ahmadis also struggle for their civic rights via applicable legal procedures, for instance, by the attempts to revoke some legal products that are considered as discriminatory towards the Ahmadiyya. Besides, the Ahmadis disseminate their non-violent teachings, most specifically love and

⁷¹ Sita az Zahra, "Peace in Diversity Berbhinneka dalam Damai". *Ahmadiyah.id*, December 8, 2015. <https://ahmadiyah.id/warta-ahmadiyah/peace-in-diversity-berbhinneka-dalam-damai.html> (accessed October 22, 2023).

peaceful *jihad*, to build a counter-narrative towards the stigmatization of the Ahmadiyya as a heretical sect.

The Ahmadiyya in Malang live in a relatively peaceful situation; they do not face any violence from the local government or local community. There has been theological contention from some figures of the Nahdlatul Ulama and Orthodox Christianity, but this is mainly aimed at preventing the members of the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Orthodox Christianity from joining the Ahmadiyya.

The peaceful cohabitation of the Ahmadiyya congregation in Malang is due to some factors and implies fundamental aspects. *First* is the socio-religious condition of Malang, in which varied religious groups and denominations live and coexist. For instance, this can be observed in Christianity in Malang, which has many denominations. The same can be said about Islam. In Malang, one may also encounter many Javanese mystical movements. Such a tolerant milieu can be considered a significant social capital for the peaceful coexistence between Ahmadiyya and other faith communities. *Second*, the local government is relatively neutral to the existence of the Ahmadiyya in Malang. *Third*, the existence of Civil Society Organisations which embrace the minority and celebrate the difference. Such an organization as the 'Gusdurian Community' plays a vital role in defending the rights of the Ahmadiyya. The existence of an interfaith forum for the youth, such as those initiated by the 'Peace in Diversity', could eradicate prejudice and misunderstanding among the youths towards other faith communities.

This peaceful life strengthens research on the Ahmadiyah community in Indonesia and its existence and exemplification of religious harmony. It also indicates the contrary situation compared to what happened in several regions in Indonesia. At the same time, this harmony will enrich the example and even best practices for internal and inter-religious relations in Indonesia, which are the first and second segments of religious harmony.

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