

Peace with No Borders No One Should Ever Be Excluded

by Haedar Nashir

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PEACE WITH NO BORDERS
NO ONE SHOULD EVER BE EXCLUDED
The Message of Islam for All

By Haedar Nashir
President of Muhammadiyah, Indonesia

September 15th-17th, 2019



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The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." (Article 1). The Universal Declaration also states that "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms ... without any distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. ..." (Article 2).

Warranting the fundamental right of every human being to life wherever they live, the Declaration asserts that "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." (Article 3). The Declaration further affirms the right to freedom from slavery, proclaiming that "no one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms." (Article 4).

Freedom from torture and degrading treatment is also proclaimed in the Declaration. It states that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." (Article 5).

The human rights recognized by the United Nations also include the right to freedom of religion and thought. The declaration states, "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." (Article 18).

With such universal human rights being recognized by the United Nations, all people, ethnic groups, nations, and states, wherever they are, need to commonly have a commitment to treat everyone all over the world as equal and give equal protection against any discrimination and ill treatment in any name. It is against this background that the International Meeting on "Peace with No Borders: Religions and Cultures in Dialogue" held in Madrid, Spain, September 15-17, 2019, finds its high relevance. Further, the discussion on "No One Should Ever be Excluded" has certainly added value to this meeting.

Religious Commitment

People all over the world have now entered a new era of globalization, that is a process and situation in which

the relations among people and nations are no longer constrained by formal national borders and frontiers. Rather, the relations are getting globalized and across boundaries. By the means of advanced information technology, including digital social media, relations among human beings are increasingly fluid and across borders. There are therefore no people or nations who strictly isolate themselves and live exclusively apart from others. In a globalizing world, inclusive social relations are imperative.

In a such borderless world, religious people would not bear to embrace exclusivism and live isolated lives. All demand an inclusive social life while remain committed to religious principles embraced. Muslims, who constitute 1.5 billion of the world population (222 millions of them live in Indonesia), are now required to have more capability to live together with others in a universal spirit of humanity in order to promote peace and harmony, and to advance human excellent civilization. That is why the understanding and actualization of Islam as divine teachings for developing peaceful coexistence among people, have become very important.

Religion has been universally important and fundamental to human beings. In the midst of this profane, worldly life, religion serves as "a unified system of belief and practices relative to sacred things ... beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community ... all those who adhere to them." (Durkheim, 1912). Religion has functioned as "the

sacred canopy" or "nomos" (meaningful order), which free human beings from "anomy" (chaos, an unordered state or instability). (Berger, 1967).

Even in this secularized, modern society, religion remains relevant and important to our life, despite its more implicit expression and actualization, and the existing separation between public and religious domains. (Wilson, 1966). The greatest challenge for religious communities is for every religion to put its sacred, high values into practice in order to create a more just, peaceful and excellent life that can lead human beings to a happy and safe shared life.

In reality, one can still find conflicts, violence and social discrimination promoted in the name of religion, bringing about social disintegration. Today global and local communities still witness racism, inhuman treatment to minorities, gender bias, human trafficking, violence toward the weak, terrorism in any form, discrimination, and other acts detrimental to human life and environment.

Religious communities need to prove that their moral commitment is helpful enough to face and provide solutions to human problems to the point that their religions can serve as a prophetic, driving force for transformation that generate kindness, peace, security, happiness, wellbeing, and multi-faceted benefits in human life all over the world.

In particular, as the manifestation of virtuous, religious values, peaceful life that is free from segregation and discrimination needs to be actualized. Religions and

religious communities across the globe should strengthen their commitment to build a more peaceful, advanced life. Religious communities should be committed to voice and actualize harmony, tolerance, mutual respect, peace, justice, and collaboration in sustaining our shared life that is free from discrimination, violence, oppression, terror, war, and any other degrading treatment.

It is important for religious communities all over the world to promote universal moral values of peaceful living without any kind of discrimination and violence, with the intention of making it the primary attention as well as collective practice of all communities and nations. In this regard, it is important to accomplish the following three notions: first, to broaden socio-religious movements working on peace and coexistence, which can provide a role model of the implementation of religious teachings regarding peace and coexistence, so that normative messages of religions can be considered as meaningful and applicable. Second, to build peace and non-discrimination as a socio-cultural ethics in our global, social life. Third, to encourage every state and government to strengthen their commitment to human rights, particularly the rights of everyone to just treatment, peace, non-discrimination and non-violence.

Islamic Perspective

Islam in particular - for example -, since the beginning of its development has been preaching of a borderless world,

that is being a blessing for all mankind and the universe. It has been consistently calls for universalism. Its messages are not confined to certain tribes and ethnic, geography and region, but they are intended to be a guide for all the universe.

In that universal humanitarian relationship without borders, Islam teaches a peaceful life for all people on earth. Islam teaches that all people should live together in kindness and peace. God and His messengers love those who want to live together in an atmosphere of mutual love, respect and collaboration in order to achieve peace and happiness on this planet. Earth and the universe, with all of their resources, are dedicated to all human beings and other God's creatures, and not merely dedicated to one single group of people or one single nation.

In the Islamic perspective, religion teaches how to establish good relationship not only with Allah (ḥabl min Allah), by means of rituals, but also with fellow human beings (ḥabl min al-nas) - to build the best civilization on earth. In addition, just like other religions, Islam teaches that humans should love other God's creatures, like plants, animals, and non-living things, which share earth and the universe. Humans are prohibited to commit mischief or corruption on earth (fasad fi al-ard), like killing, natural resource exploitation, and any acts harmful to life.

In Islam - merely as an instance - every Muslim is taught to be just, by being objective and impartial toward

anyone, regardless of their religion, race, ethnic background, nation, or social status. Justice is an essential teaching in Islam. God said in the Qur'an, "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. (Q al-Nisa': 135).

In addition to justice (*'adl*), every Muslim is taught to do *ihsan*, i.e. to obtain excellence in doing good deeds. Justice and *ihsan* should be shown to anyone, even to those one hates, as insisted in a Qur'anic verse: "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. (Q al-Ma'idah: 8).

Islam also teaches Muslims to spread mercy and love to all human beings and other God's creatures in the universe. The Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. was sent as a mercy to the worlds (Q al-Anbiya': 107), which means that every believer should spread mercy to all. The mercy should even be shown to animals, plants, and all creatures, as stated in a Prophetic tradition, "Be merciful to those on the earth and the One above the heavens will have mercy upon you," and on the contrary, "Whoever does not show mercy to those on the earth, the One above the heavens will not show mercy upon him." (Hadith narrated by al-Tabarani).

Islam upholds universal humanistic values to allow all human beings live together peacefully. Every person should interact with others in an atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance, and collaboration to attain salvation, dignity, well-being, progress, and happiness for all God's creatures in the universe. With our spirit of living together sincerely and peacefully, as well as our sublime morality, one can save the over-burdened earth and make it a comfortable place for all people.

In Islam, the key to peaceful coexistence is *ta'aruf*, that is knowing each other deeply on the basis of love and equality. Allah said in the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ
شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted." (Q al-Hujurat/49:13).

The difference in religion, race, ethnicity, nationality and country, should not prevent us from living together in true peace, security and happiness. Likewise, any political or economic interest and control over natural resources to meet

the life needs of people must consider life sustainability of all human beings on earth. Humans should not struggle to dominate, exploit, and abuse each other. If that is the case, it would then destroy our civilization.

The struggle to control and dominate political, economic, and natural resources has caused wars, conflicts, and enmity between different peoples. The world cannot bear the conflicts caused by the greed of certain people. The world would be safe if all nations and countries are united in managing this gift from God together based on an authentic brotherhood, peace and love.

Our movement to coexist in love, harmony, peace and mutual care and share between people from different religions, groups and nations should shape the spirit of pluralism of every country and international community. The relationship between peoples and nations in this twenty first century, globalizing and modern world should now go beyond conventional frontiers and move towards the new era of "Shared World". Also, we have to work together to prevent and reject any kind of violence, oppressions, conflicts, wars and corruption of human civilization.

The Role of the Muhammadiyah

The Muhammadiyah, as the Indonesian largest modern Islamic organization, with about 40 million members, has long existed to actualize Islam as a religion of human civilizational progress, presenting Islam as a religion of

civilization (din al-ḥaḍlarah). The Muhammadiyah sees that Islam consists of a set of teachings related to belief (aqida), worship ('ibada), and good conduct (akhlaq) – important dimensions of religious life. In addition, Islam teaches its followers to be able to live together by its teachings on practices of worldly affairs (mu'amala dunyawiya) based on such values as perfect kindness (iḥsan), justice, peace, as well as sublime humanistic and social values. Based on the Islamic principles of mu'amala, one's relationship with Allah (ḥabl min Allah) should be as good as one's relationship with fellow human beings (ḥabl min al-nas) and environments – through developing excellent, noble values.

In the view of the Muhammadiyah, Islamic da'wa, which means spreading and applying Islam in both individual and social lives, should bring a mission of spreading mercy to the whole world (raḥmatan li al-'ālamīn), just as Allah said in the Qur'an:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

“And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.” (Q al- Anbiya' /21:107).

In conducting Islamic da'wa activities, the Muhammadiyah has made many attempts to nurture and implement religious values of kindness, peace, and progress for all. Muhammadiyah da'wa activities are inclusive in nature, being devoted to all society members regardless of

their backgrounds without any discrimination (named as a concept of *dakwah jamaah* - literally meaning "collective *da'wa*").

Muhammadiyah *da'wa* activities to build a better society, which have been conducted through educational institutions, health institutions, social care, economic empowerment, community development and other social efforts, are basically the representation of its movement orientation: "Muhammadiyah for All" (Muhammadiyah untuk Semua). Likewise, the organization's women's wing, the *Aisyiyah*, has developed inclusive programs of community development and philanthropy throughout Indonesia.

In the eastern part of Indonesia, such as Papua and East Nusa Tenggara, where Muslims are minority, the Muhammadiyah has run inclusive institutions and programs in education, health, social service and community development. In Papua, for instance, the Muhammadiyah promote social integration by running schools, higher education, health care and other social services for local citizens who are mostly Christians and Catholics. As another instance, in Papua, the Muhammadiyah runs community development programs for Kokoda ethnic people despite the difference in religion and ethnicity.

Muhammadiyah inclusive programs for humanity, such as disaster relief and management, as well as community development in the most remote and isolated areas, have

been widely acclaimed. The Muhammadiyah, including the Aisyiyah, has been very active in running programs of disaster management, like in Aceh, Yogyakarta, West Sumatera, West Nusa Tenggara, and currently in Central Sulawesi and West Sulawesi recently struck by earthquake and tsunami. Those humanity programs have been jointly managed by Muhammadiyah bodies, namely the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC), the Muhammadiyah Zakah Management Body (Lazismu), the Muhammadiyah Council for Public Health (MPKU), the Muhammadiyah Council for Social Welfare (MPKS), and other Muhammadiyah networks all over Indonesia. In addition, the Aisyiyah has also actively run similar social and humanitarian programs.

The Muhammadiyah has played an important role in conflict resolution in the southern Philippines, southern Thailand, and other parts of the world to promote reconciliation and peace. In addition, the Muhammadiyah has run humanitarian programs in Rohingya and Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh through the "Muhammadiyah Aid". The Muhammadiyah also run humanitarian programs to help the Palestinians, who have received unfair treatment and are still under oppression in the Middle East - a situation supposed to be absent in the modern 21th century world, which upholds human rights and democracy - to be able to enjoy freedom and peace in living together just like other sovereign nations and countries.

The efforts of the Muhammadiyah for peace as well as humanitarian and social service programs are basically the actualization of its spirit to present Islam as a religion of action and enlightenment (*dīn al-‘amal wa al-tanwīr*), that is a religion that continuously inspires liberative, empowering actions, and improves human life. In this regard, Islam is also presented as “*Dīn al-Salām*”, that is a religion of peace and security. Muhammadiyah practice of faith through its da‘wa efforts at home and abroad, has actualized Islam as a mercy to all creatures (*rahmatan li al-‘ālamīn*), being a praxis of Islam that fosters peaceful life and more inclusive humanism for all nations without any discrimination.

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