

“WELCOMING THE OTHER THROUGH JUST AND HARMONIOUS SOCIETIES”¹

(sharing from Indonesia)

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1. Foreword

First and foremost, I give my utmost gratitude to the Organizers to have given their trust upon me, as a representative of the Institute for Interfaith Dialog in Indonesia (Institut Dialog Antariman di Indonesia (INTERFIDEI)), to share point of view, experience, and reflection upon our experiences in our journey with the Indonesian Interfaith Movement for Justice, Righteousness, Equality, and Peace in Indonesia in this honorable assembly, The 9th World Assembly of Religions for Peace. It is an opportunity in which we all can learn from various walks of life and knowledge in the spirit of “Welcoming the other: action for Human Dignity, Citizenship and Shared Wellbeing”.³

The theme of the discussion, “Welcoming the Other through Just and Harmonious Societies”, makes me utterly pleased, due to its relation to Human Dignity, Citizenship dan Wellbeing. Emphasize on those words, because they are profoundly important in my following elaboration.

2. Several Consensual Principles in self-criticism, pointing ahead

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³ I prefer to say: “Welcoming Each Other: Action for Human Dignity, Citizenship and Shared Willbeing”, rather than “Welcoming The Other”.

In every religion and belief, besides the Golden Rule, “If you want others to respect you, you have to respect them, too;”, there are also other accurate holy scriptures, powerful and profound as well as documents which collectively compiled and agreed upon. They are supposed to be our source of constructing a positive state of mind in living with others in diversity. How we making decisions, implementing those decisions in and through of each of our individuals, our groups and our society, our nation, in the interest of broader, honorable, and civilized humanity.

Several of the documents are for example: Prophet Muhammad SAW’s final sermon at the mount Arafah; Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount; Buddha Gautama’s sermon at Benares.⁴ In the 20th and 21st century, there is Global Ethic⁵ and A Common Word⁶ document which consists of “kalimatul sawa”, LOVE (love to God and love to each other), which is a very powerful word in Christianity and Islam as well as other

⁴ Messages from Buddha Gautama, Jesus Christ, and Prophet Muhammad SAW are eternal and universal guidance. Buddha Gautama shows universal existential realism we are all experiencing, *dukkha*, which means misery that roots from human’s lust to own and human’s attachment to have power over something. The misery could be eliminated if humans transform themselves by cleaning their heart and mind; be wary of what they say and do. Jesus Christ emphasizes the human role as the salt and light of the world, which brings love and peace. That role could only be obtained if humans act in kindness without expecting anything in return for their personal gain, self-criticizing instead of criticizing others, and nourish their relationship with God and each other. Prophet Muhammad ended the sermon by emphasizing the principles of unity, equality, reward to female, appreciation of human’s dignity, soul, and property, building a new era where there is no revenge sought, bloodshed, or tyranny. Prophet Muhammad also emphasized that the human race is one, equal, and all united. Racial, descendant, and skin complexion are prohibited to be a reason for practices of discrimination.

⁵ It was presented at the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions, held in Chicago, IL on 1993-SEP-4. The declaration, with [The Principles of a Global Ethic](#) appended, was signed by 143 respected leaders from all of the world's major faiths, including the Baha'i Faith, Brahmanism, Brahma Kumaris, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Indigenous, Interfaith, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Native American, Neo-Pagan, Sikhism, Taoism, Theosophist, Unitarian Universalist and Zoroastrian. The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions offers it to the world as an initial statement of a group of rules for living on which all of the world's religions can agree.

⁶ **A Common Word between we and You** is an [open letter](#), dated 13 October 2007, from leaders of the [Islamic religion](#) to leaders of the [Christian religion](#). It calls for peace between [Muslims](#) and [Christians](#) and tries to work for common ground and understanding between both religions, in line with the [Qur'anic](#) commandment to "[Say: 'O People of the Scripture! come to a common word as between us and you: that we worship none but God'](#)" and the [Biblical commandment to love God, and one's neighbour](#). In the time since its release, "A Common Word" opened an interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

religions. All of those scriptures emphasize the aspect of morality, ethics, spirituality, and rooted social values.

The question for all of us is whether the meaning of those holy scriptures and documents still the inspiration for our basis of thinking in making decisions, implementing those decisions in the development of our religious community, our institutions as well as constructing our society, nation, and the global world?

3. Discussion of the word Citizenship

Personally for me, it is a strong, rooted, and relevant in the term of Indonesia context today, in the relation to the theme. In the Constitution of Indonesia, RIGHTS equals Citizenship, not “minority or majority”. Being a majority is not a privilege, because public services are equal rights for each and every citizen. The term “minority-majority” has to be dispensed. Why? Because it is the reason why a State’s regulations and its implementations become unequal, discriminative, and have the potential for conflict. The term was created and familiarized nothing more than to fulfill political agendas and legalize intolerant practices by self-acclaimed “majority” groups. For example, the Muslim intolerant groups are not the majority of Muslims in Indonesia, and cannot be generalized as the only type of Islamic group in Indonesia. There is a significant amount (and more) of tolerant Indonesian Muslims. In the Christian community, I always say that if one demands their rights to be fulfilled, never use the logic that because one is a minority then it justifies their rights to be handed to them; instead, use the “citizenship” logic. It is authentic and original. The citizens and peoples of Indonesia who are Christians, Buddhists, Hindu, Konghucu, Baha’l, and others have equal rights as Muslims. From this understanding, I find it fitting with today’s theme: “Welcoming the Other through Just and Harmonious Societies” in relation to Human Dignity, Citizenship dan Wellbeing.

4. The Context of Heterogeneous/Pluralism Problem in Indonesia

a. Pluralism/Heterogeneous and the Constitution

The peoples of Indonesia is very heterogeneous and scattered all over the archipelago, each has different ethnicities, cultures, languages, complexions, characters, and customs, as well as religions and beliefs. From the religions and beliefs that are acknowledged by the government (Buddha, Hindu, Islam, Christianity, Protestant, Catholicism, Konghucu), religions and beliefs that are taken into account in governmental affairs, until religions and beliefs that are “seemingly” acknowledged, the ones that are not taken into account in governmental affairs, and local religions. In each religion there are also many different sects, types, denomination. The believers are the citizens, inhabitants, and the peoples of Indonesia.

Due to the plurality, there are inescapable differences, such as teachings, interpretations, symbols, and languages; which are in accordance to distinctive needs in order to live and grow in a national scope.

This fact has been established since before Indonesia existed and became one of the significant considerations in compiling and determining The Foundation of Indonesia, (Dasar Negara Indonesia), which is Pancasila⁷ and the Constitution (Undang-Undang Dasar 1945), as well as the national motto: “Bhineka Tunggal Ika” (Unity in Diversity). Therefore it is stated in the Constitution that every citizen of Indonesia has the right to believe in a religion and faith of their choice, and to practice religion accordingly. The State (the government and the national regulation) is required to protect, grant security, as well as freedom, for its citizens to practice their religion.

The question is, how is it implemented in reality?

⁷ **Pancasila** (pronounced [[pantʃaˈsila](#)]) is the official [philosophical](#) foundation of the [Indonesian](#) state.^[1] Pancasila consists of two [Old Javanese](#) words (originally from [Sanskrit](#)), "*pañca*" meaning five, and "*śīla*" meaning principles. It comprises five principles held to be inseparable and interrelated: 1. [Belief in the divinity of God](#), (in [Indonesian](#), *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*). 2. [Just](#) and civilized humanity, (in Indonesian, *Kemanusiaan Yang Adil dan Beradab*). 3. The unity of Indonesia, (in Indonesian, *Persatuan Indonesia*). 4. [Democracy](#) guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives (in Indonesian, *Kerakyatan Yang Dipimpin oleh Hikmat Kebijaksanaan, Dalam Permusyawaratan dan Perwakilan*). 5. [Social justice](#) for all of the people of Indonesia (in [Indonesian](#), *Keadilan Sosial bagi seluruh Rakyat Indonesia*)

b. A number of cases: capturing life of the society, challenges in the future.

There are three cases that I will elaborate here along with a fundamental question, *where is the firm stance from the State (government) and religious figures or religious leaders?*

1. The restriction against Ahmadiyah and Syiah Indonesia believers to practice their religion by accuse them of wrongful practices of Islam. Based on that accusation, they are evicted from their homes and lands, even their homes were severely destructed, burnt down, and the worst of all, some of them were murdered. In some places, they became refugees, live as nomads with no certainty, especially their children. There are people who have been living that way for seven years (Ahmadiyah in Lombok), and almost two years (Syiah in Sampang). Ironically, the government (through the minister of religious affair department) requested a dialog with them with the intention to “cure and turn them to believe in the right Islam in the right direction”. The question is, which is the “right Islam” and the “right direction” to the right Islam? The one, who use violence or the one who wants peace? Who deserves to be called being in “the right path of Islam”? Does being a minister of religion justify the previous act?

2. The case of Protestant Church, Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI) Taman Yasmin, Bogor (2002-now). The church attendees are not allowed to practice in the church building – by the local government (city mayor) – based on the requests of intolerant groups – even though they have a legal permit from the Supreme Court. They are allowed to build and use the church building to practice and conduct their religious events. Until today, the local government (city mayor) and national government (the president) has yet accept the legal permit from the Supreme Court, and the case remains unresolved. Similar to the case of HKBP (Huria Kristen Batak Protestan), Ciketing. The person who committed violence is freed and the victim, the priest, is going through the law process. Both churches’ attendees have to conduct their religious practices in an open-space in front of the President’s palace, accompanied

by a crowd—and usually including activists and Islamic influential figures who are consistently committed to their principles of diversity, of the citizen's rights in having a religious belief, in accordance to the Constitution.

3. The flow of new settlers among islands, especially Java, the most populated island in Indonesia. They roam around various areas in Indonesia due to the economy. They come, not only as an “empty” individual with no label attached, but also with differences in ethnicities, faith (religion), and political interests. Take an example coming from the new settlers in Papua: the island with a 50-years history of excruciating, rooted, violent, unjust Human Rights challenges. Their natural resources are taken away from them, left with poverty, HIV/AIDS, along with underdeveloped education. Up to now, there is yet to be a significant improvement in the means of creating a secure, equal, and violence-free environment. With the addition of newcomers along with their “labels”, religious and cultural practices, there is a tendency for anxiety and conflicted perception among Papuans, and there is yet to be a momentum for an open dialog. Moreover, there is a story going on about the existence of a systematic attempt to relocate Papuan children for specific purposes, such as placing them in various *pesantrens* (traditional Islamic boarding school) in Jakarta and around Java in general. Those children are taught an intimidating way, as well as brainwashed in order to shape them as militants for a particular religion in the future—to bring conflict among religions in Papua. At the same time, various Christian groups are surfacing all around Papua, with the tendency in a change on the church map. The question I would like to propose is: With the growing number of the churches, religions, and children relocation, would it resulting in a better situation for Papua? Would them help Papua to become a land of Peace? As far as I see, there is no indication that it would go that way. This condition will develop to be a severe potential conflict cause if there is no action taken to anticipate it. The humanity condition in Papua might get even worse.

5. Pointing Ahead

Aside from civil society, including The Network of Indonesian Interfaith Movement for Justice, Righteousness, Equality, and Peace⁸ which has been and will always be up and running in solving problems, there are a couple more institutions that is expected to take part in “Welcoming the Other for Just and Harmonious Society, locally, nationally, regionally, and internationally”.

First of all, the State (the government). Generally speaking, the interventions the government has carried out are seemingly misguided. There is an act of confounding protection and security based on the Constitution, with protection and security based on power and political interests; and it is unjust, as well as filled with certain religion’s political ideology with a majority-minority framework and truth-claim theology. In Papua case, the national and local governments’ effort has only reached the surface of the problem; it has not improved to solve the core problems, including reading the dynamics of religions in Papua, of today and in reference to the future. Will the improvement and change in the map of religions of Papua produce a hopeful notion in the Peaceful Papua direction? The peace dialog which proposed by the Papuans and supported by many people, included the National Interfaith Network to the central government is even yet to start by real and systematic actions.

In times like this, we need, not only smart, but also firm, courageous, and committed government that has the much-needed integrity based on Pancasila and the Constitution, from the local one to the national one. We acknowledge and appreciate the effort put by several local governments, which have the capability and have implemented it in reality. This brings the ultimate hope for us, to what we do, that there are leaders with authentic commitments in building their country. They deserve to be awarded and to become an ideal example in building a nation-society capable of creating welcoming the other (each other) for Just and harmonious societies. They are hoped and expected to bring Indonesia to become a

⁸ This Network consisting of different stakeholders: NGOs, Universities, Schools, Religious Institutions, Journalists, Arts, Government.

nation of well-giver, that appreciate human dignity and the global citizen rights, and lives up to the principle of shared wellbeing. They have left behind irrelevant principles of the past, which is: right or wrong is my country, and have continued to uphold: right is right, wrong is wrong at this very moment.

Second of all, religious institutions (means religious figures, too). Religious institutions do not have the right to justify a similar previous point of view. Any religious institution is under the Republic of Indonesia's regulations, therefore has to conduct their actions based on Pancasila and the Constitution, not on any particular religious foundation.

We need religious figures/leaders; the ones who lead religious institutions in full commitment to the principle of welcoming the other for just and harmonious societies—with good intent of verbal, action, implementation; domestically and internationally. We are not asking for religious figures/leaders or religious institutions that have difficulties in being consistent in the midst of plurality due to a particular religion's political ideology. We need religious figures/leaders that have an understanding, respect and integrity to diversity and differences, whom are able to welcoming the other openly, by heart and full of trust that he/she or they are also human, citizen, who has the same rights.

6. From Indonesia-with Indonesia for the future of Religions for Peace

Seeing how it is in reality today, I am intrigued to quote what is stated in Djohan Effendi's book. He quoted what Prophet Muhammad SAW once said, "I am worried, there will come a time when Islam is just like another name, Al Quran is just words, mosques are seemingly full with people but absent of directions, religious figures are as evil as humans under the roof of the sky, and from and to them comes lies." Even though his saying was directed for muslims, but I think and I believe other religious groups other than muslims feel and experience the same way in their own groups.⁹

⁹ Djohan Effendi, *Menimba Pelajaran dari Berbagai Agama dan Keyakinan*, Interfidei 2013

Some concrete actions:

- a. Two prominent notes above are crucial to become the basis in a consensual path for the world's religions' peaceful future. Sacrificing humanity and citizen rights is no longer relevant to pursue exclusive religious political interests as a foundation of the society wellbeing.
- b. Principles such a "right or wrong is my country" is no longer relevant; practice "right is right - wrong is wrong" instead. It will keep us from sliding in to a void of fake peace and to a reality of peace.
- c. The local, national, and international networking has to be maintained as an important aspect. Networking for peace. Therefore, it is to be maintained, widen, and strengthen constantly.
- d. Education for leaders of religions, teachers, women, youths is an important key: it manages differences/diversities¹⁰, political knowledge, Human Rights, and a mindset of democracy.
- e. A comprehensive study and thorough research has to be conducted in the field of demography change in the world—not only religion-related but also religion-politics-nation-state, and religion-economy/market-politics issues. In my humble opinion, those three issues are significant in the constellation of today's nation relations in creating a just and equal global environment for a peaceful future.

Thank you!

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¹⁰ We all have differences. How those differences can be a communal strength to bring life for all of us, and the life will bring us our future, a future for our children; a bright future, a healthy future, a humane future. On that account, dialogue is the best way for us to do. A dialogue will help us achieve a common civilized life. A dialogue will help us face, overcome, and resolve a problem in a sensible manner: dialogue is not merely exchanging words, nor by thought only, but by heart. It is taking a concrete action together, too.

