

## Beyond Religious Tolerance in Interfaith Dialogue Spaces in Yogyakarta: Reading from a Hospitality Perspective

Gerry Nelwan<sup>1</sup> and Gerald Moratua Siregar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Master of Arts in Peace Studies, Postgraduate Study, Faculty of Theology, UKDW Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Master in Philosophy, Postgraduate Study, Faculty of Theology, UKDW Yogyakarta, Indonesia

\*[gerrynelwan11@gmail.com](mailto:gerrynelwan11@gmail.com)

**Abstracts:** Diversity in Indonesian society is part of the reality that must be interpreted as the riches or uniqueness of this nation. However, conflicts and violence continue to be issues that disturb this diverse reality. These issues have forced the campaign for religious tolerance in society to continue to be carried out. This study aims to analyze the interfaith encounters that occurred in Yogyakarta and then proceed to read it from the perspective of hospitality. This research will use a descriptive qualitative methodology with observations, literature analysis, and interviews. The focus is on the Ahmadiyya group in Yogyakarta as one of the interfaith meeting spaces. The Ahmadiyya group often opens space and provides a place for interfaith dialogue for students and young people from different religious, cultural, and belief backgrounds. The formation of a dialogue space as a form of building an attitude of tolerance is not the end of achieving harmony or peace, but establishing the dimension of hospitality is also important in this particular discourse. Especially in enrolling in the post-pandemic period, a hospitality-based meeting room is needed.

**Keywords:** Religious tolerance, interfaith dialogue, hospitality, Ahmadiyyah group in Yogyakarta.

### Introduction

These days, discourses related to tolerance continue to color the social space of Indonesian society. The birth of this discourse and its movement cannot be separated from the many acts of intolerance that occur, especially involving inter-religious, ethnic, and belief groups. In the post of the New Order era, many conflicts, violence, and acts of intolerance occurred, i.e. conflicts in Maluku, Poso, and Surakarta which claimed many lives. The issues used in these conflicts cannot be separated from religious and ethnic sentiments, including those involving Christian, Muslim, and Chinese ethnic groups. Thus, from here, it is important to build an attitude of tolerance to prevent violence and conflict based on religion or ethnicity in various regions, learning from the events of Maluku, Poso, and Surakarta.

Research on religious tolerance is easy to find, this is due to the religious tolerance movement which is prioritized by the government to prevent conflicts between religions, ethnicities, and beliefs in Indonesia. In 2020, Kiki Mayasaroh and Nurhasanah Bakhtiar in their research found that there are six strategies for building harmony between religious communities, such as internalizing tolerance, maintaining kinship, mutual respect, trusting each other and avoiding prejudice, clarifying and confirming the information obtained including to act fairly (Mayasaroh, 2020). On the other hand, Abror sees that the essence of moderation can be a frame for creating a space of tolerance as an effort to respect and appreciate each other (Abror Mhd, 2020).

However, religious and ethnic sentiments seem to be inseparable from Indonesian society. It can be seen that there are still frequent conflicts with religious and ethnic issues in some areas. One of the most obvious events to be used as a reference is the election of the governor of DKI Jakarta in 2017, which has played identity politics as part of religious and ethnic sentiments. Thus, the tolerance movement has become stronger carried out by various state institutions, NGOs, and communities that focus on peace to harmony.

On the other hand, persecution of minority groups also continues to occur as experienced by the Ahmadiyya group. Data shows that on February 6, 2011, there was persecution in Cikeusik, Pandeglang, in Banten which killed 3 people. Previously, in 2009, the number of acts of persecution against the Ahmadiyya group amounted to 33 attacks and increased in 2010 to 50 attacks. The total number of attacks against the Ahmadiyya from 2008-2018 was 155 attacks. Of these attacks, the most severe occurred in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) on February 4, 2006, and in Kampung Grepek, Greneng Village, East Lombok, NTB in 2018 (Wahidin, 2020).

Discussing the Ahmadiyya group often starts from the problem of persecution and differences that have an impact on intolerant cases. As written by Tutut Chusniyah et al., political intolerance towards Ahmadiyya congregations is often motivated by differences in beliefs with residents. Aspects that encourage political intolerance are usually a phenomenon between groups, not individuals (Tutut Chusniyah, Fattah Hidayat, 2020).

Although many have become victims of persecution in several areas, this has not prevented the Ahmadiyya group from closing themselves off from interreligious and ethnic encounters. In addition to engaging in interreligious and ethnic dialogue, the Ahmadiyya group also often hosts to facilitate these encounters. This is what the researchers of this article find

interesting and important, that the narrative of tolerance can be packaged in the form of a formal interfaith dialogue by formal institutions and communities based on peacebuilding. And it becomes even more interesting when the Ahmadiyya group, which is often the victim of persecution, actually took the initiative to host this interfaith meeting. This is seen as an effort to go beyond the form of religious tolerance through hospitality. From several previous studies, it has not been found that there are aspects that portray the activities of the Ahmadiyyah group with a hospitality perspective as a form of interfaith encounter and acceptance.

In this article, the research results will be analyzed using the theory of hospitality from the perspective of Marianne Moyaert. The forms of interfaith encounters that occur in the Ahmadiyya community are interwoven in various forms, ranging from social work to joint dialogue with parties of different religions, ethnicities, and cultures. Moyaert's view of hospitality is one of the important ideas that will be used in this study related to the dialogical tension between the existence of openness and the identity to accept others.

## **Methods**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative methodology. The process was carried out starting from observation, literature analysis, and interviews with informants selected based on purposive samplings, such as leaders and members of the Ahmadiyya group. Before the interview was conducted, the data needed for observation had been collected, such as collecting scientific literature and information related to social activities in the Ahmadiyya community. Furthermore, the data is deepened and confirmed through interviews. This is done according to the demands of a descriptive qualitative methodology, where the researcher(s) must try to describe objects, phenomena, or social settings in narrative form (Setiawan, 2018). The focus of this research was on the Ahmadiyya group at the Fadhli Umar Mosque, Yogyakarta.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **1. The activities of the Ahmadiyya group in social relations**

Contemporary Ahmadiyya groups have the motto "Love for All, Hatred for None". This motto was born after almost 80 years of Ahmadiyya's existence. It was first raised at the Ahmadiyya international conference in London in 1978. At that time, the third caliph of Ahmadiyya, Mirza Nasir Ahmad, was asked about what contribution Ahmadiyya could make during the turmoil of the Cold War. Nasir Ahmad replied: "Love for all, hatred for none." (Sulistiyati, 2019).

This is interesting because this motto is present at a time when Ahmadiyya groups around the world are required to prove themselves from two directions. First, to prove themselves against the pressure of orthodox Islamic groups, who often doubt the Islamicity of the Ahmadiyya group; second, to prove themselves against the wave of Islamophobia that began to emerge at that time, especially in European and American countries, which were wrong in viewing Islam (Sulistiyati, 2019). Amid this dualism of pressure, Ahmadiyya can give birth to peaceful thoughts and spirits for others. This certainly helps to move the Ahmadiyya group, in their social relations, to realize "Love for all, hatred for none" through social activities and encounters with others.

Ahmadiyya has a wing organization, namely, a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called Humanity First. This NGO is an international social organization engaged in disaster management, social assistance, and health improvements. Humanity First was established in 1995 and started its organizational activities in Indonesia in 2004, under the name Humanity First Indonesia. This NGO is run by thousands of Ahmadi volunteers around the world ("About Us," 2022). This NGO is a manifestation of Ahmadiyya's altruism which is known to be extraordinarily good. They are not only active in donating their money, but they are also active in donating their body parts if needed (Faiz, 2018). On July 22, 2017, the Indonesian Record Museum (MURI) awarded a record certificate to the Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI) as the largest eye donor in Indonesia. When the charter was granted, 258 JAI members donated corneas, and another 516 people helped with corneal damage (Fatubun, 2017).

Ahmadiyya youth are also active in Clean the City (CTC) activity. This activity was initiated by the Khuddamul Ahmadiyya Indonesia Council, the youth organization of JAI, around the beginning of 2015. The background of the CTC is the emergence of concern among the youth of JAI when they see a lot of municipal waste littering city centers after the New Year's Eve celebration every January 1st. Therefore, from 2015 until now, its activities are

routinely carried out every January 1 starting after the dawn prayer until around 8 am. Initially (in 2015) this activity was only carried out in four cities: Jakarta, Bandung, Sukabumi, and Garut. However, this activity spread so quickly that on January 1, 2018, CTC was carried out in 50 cities/districts. Interestingly, this CTC activity was not only carried out by JAI youth but was also attended by various elements of youth and society from various religions and beliefs (Rohmawati, 2018). In this case, JAI not only cares about the environment but also opens meeting rooms for different groups.

Another activity in social relations is blood donation. At first glance, the action of blood donation is a common thing. But for JAI, this action is like an order or an obligation. They get restless if they don't applicate the action. In the beginning, blood donation actions were carried out sporadically and independently in various cities. In the future, for this action to become a permanent movement, in 2016 JAI initiated the National Blood Donor Movement (Gerakan Donor Darah Nasional - GDDN). GDDN is a national agenda every three months, which is held on the same date in various cities in Indonesia (Rohmawati, 2018). GDDN has become one of the flagship programs for JAI in caring for others.

Another action is the *Langgar Khana* activity. *Langgar Khana* (Urdu) simply means soup kitchen (or *dapur umum* in Bahasa). This activity is routinely carried out every Friday as part of social care for those in need. *Langgar Khana* is held in Ahmadiyya Mosques every Friday (Shakeel Ahmad, interview, 22 August 2022).

Of the several activities in social relations carried out by JAI, there was one activity that most attracted the attention of the researchers, namely the Chai Time activity, which was only held by JAI in the Yogyakarta area. This activity was initiated by Maulana Murtiyono Yusuf Ismail (Mln. Murti), the leader (*mubaligh*) of JAI in the Yogyakarta area. Chai Time is a discussion activity on hot issues while enjoying chai tea in the meeting room of the Fadhli Umar Mosque (JAI Yogyakarta Mosque).

Chai tea is a typical Indian and Pakistani tea, which is made from a mixture of tea, fresh milk, and various spices, such as cardamom, ginger, cloves, and cinnamon. Chai tea is efficacious for health and provides warmth to the body in cold weather (Khiththathi, 2018). It is this element of “warmth” that drives Mln. Murti initiated Chai Time at JAI Yogyakarta area. This activity is held every month by inviting interfaith brothers and sisters to discuss social issues, ideology, and interfaith togetherness. For example, on November 24, 2021, at the At-



Tahir Ahmadiyya Jamaat Mosque (before moving to the Fadhli Umar Mosque in Yogyakarta), a Chai Time activity was held which brought participants from Islam (NU), Christianity (Protestant and Adventist) and open space for discussion as an effort mutual understanding and the growth of the value of trust in one another is felt by all parties, especially the hospitality provided by Ahmadiyya friends (Ahmad, 2021).

This friendly relationship became even more interesting because JAI in the Yogyakarta area had several times invited groups that had persecuted them (in other cities outside Yogyakarta) to attend this Chai Time activity. In an interview with Mln. Murti, also said that so far there has never been a heated debate with these groups, and even, on the contrary, the groups stated that they are starting to know and understand more about the Ahmadiyya group (Ghifari, 2022). In addition, the other goals of Chai Time stated by Mln. Murti is so that there is mutuality between interfaith groups, and the main thing is to get to know each other and inspire each other. "*Tak kenal, maka tak sayang*" or "If you don't know it, then you might not love it," he said (Murtiyono Yusuf Ismail, interview, 24 August 2022). In this case, JAI Yogyakarta is more or less quite successful and has a good impact on building social relations with others through the hospitality they have.

## 2. Hospitality from Marianne Moyaert's perspective

The discourse of hospitality has undergone many developments from various perspectives, but it becomes important when first understood through its terminology. Hospitality itself in the Indo-European language, namely, hospitality which comes from two words *hospes* and *hostis*. The host can be interpreted as 'host' or also 'foreigner', while hostility which still comes from the same word means 'guest' but can also mean 'enemy' (Epafras, 2020). In simple terms, it can be understood that hospitality is a form of hospitality towards foreigners in the understanding of being a host but also an enemy.

Departing from the basic understanding of hospitality above, it can also be seen specifically in the views of one scholar who also provides a perspective on the hospitality discourse, namely, Marianne Moyaert. One view that comes from Moyaert's thinking relates to language hospitality as a sequel to Ricoeur's concept. Moyaert's response to language hospitality as a model cannot be separated from human limitations. For example, it is difficult for a man to

stay forever in a house with other people without conflicts. In addition, this can also mean that language hospitality provides space to express openness to others, especially in recognition in terms of understanding what other people believe (Moyaert, 2008: 59 in Dister, 2010).

Although Moyaert's foundation of thinking is motivated by the Christianity context, his ideas are also put to be relevant in a different space, in this case, the Ahmadiyya group. Moyaert's perspective can provide an alternative way of reading the interfaith encounters and dialogues conducted by the Ahmadiyya group in Yogyakarta. Moyaert's dialogue on Ricoeur's thoughts related to language hospitality is one of the ideas in the hospitality discourse space, where several analyzes will be used in this article, namely Moyaert's two main ideas about hermeneutic openness and openness as appreciation.

According to Moyaert, in the theory of theology of religions, there are always consequences when faced with the practice of interreligious dialogue and its relationship to dialogical tension. There are two forms of openness, namely: hermeneutical openness and openness as appreciation. The first openness involves a hermeneutical challenge, where this process begins with questions that show the extent to which there is mutual understanding regarding the meanings, symbols, teachings, and religious practices of other groups. The second openness relates to recognition as part of respect for different groups (Moyaert, 2011). This then became the main idea of Moyaert as the basis for analyzing the data found.

Kristiawan who also shared Moyaert's thoughts by writing that several dialogue models can be developed from Moyaert's concept of overcoming the tension between identity and solidarity in the interreligious dialogue space as a process of implementing hospitality. According to Kristiawan, one thing that can also be applied is to emphasize the aspects of experience with different people, for example through dialogue, deep learning, living together, and participating with people of other religions. Departing from this, it can also provide a serious religious odyssey without letting go of one's own religious identity (Kristiawan, 2020).

### **3. Analysis of Ahmadiyya activities from the perspective of hospitality Marianne Moyaert**

Based on the observation at the beginning of this paper, it can be seen that the Ahmadiyya group carries out many social and interreligious activities. One of the activities is Chai Time, which involves individuals and groups from different religious, ethnic, and belief

backgrounds. Chai Time is held at the Ahmadiyya Mosque in the form of an open interactive dialogue, where this meeting is usually dominated by various questions related to the whereabouts of Ahmadiyya, i.e.: questions about incidents of persecution, or questions about the subject of their theological basis. As 'hosts', Ahmadiyya friends also opened themselves up in the dialogue, especially regarding phenomena that often occur such as acts of persecution even though they are found in other places. The many curiosities of the 'guests' or discussion participants made Chai Time a process of learning and understanding the existence of Ahmadiyya.

The dialogue in Chai Time could not be separated from the dynamics that were driven by the curiosity of the participants which then led to certain tensions. This was later conveyed by Moyaert, that in interreligious dialogue there will be dialogue tension as part of the consequences. However, behind that, there is a process of learning from each other about the meaning, symbols, teachings, and religious practices of Ahmadiyya friends. This is an illustration of the basis for hermeneutic openness that occurs in the dialogue at Chai Time, especially when it comes to the theological and historical space of Ahmadiyya.

Chai Time is not only a room for discussion about the existence of the Ahmadiyya but also is wide open to touch on social issues, ideology, and interfaith togetherness. Although the main goal is the process of getting to know each other in practice, the symbols, meanings, and rituals of worship, especially in the Ahmadiyya tradition, which is still poorly understood by many people. Ignorance of the Ahmadiyya is one of the driving factors that are deliberately provoked by certain elements in creating conflict and violence such as persecution.

After experiencing interactive discussions, everyone can accept and acknowledge the existence of different people, this is what Moyaert calls part of the openness as an appreciation. The practice of openness as an appreciation that occurs in Chai Time is a process to create a form of hospitality without leaving everyone's identity. When the practice of hospitality has been built through the introduction, acceptance, recognition, and appreciation of others, this becomes an alternative to religious attitudes that go beyond the pattern of tolerance. Moyaert assisted in constructing the practice of Chai Time in the Ahmadiyya group as a process to create an attitude of mutual understanding, acceptance, and support for the realization of humanist religious practices.



## **Conclusion**

Nowadays, efforts to foster tolerance in society are starting to be carried out, this cannot be separated from the many phenomena of intolerance that have an impact on loss of life. For example, the persecution of the Ahmadiyya group in several areas in Indonesia. Victims will usually tend to close themselves to others. However, in the observations and analysis conducted by the research team, it was found that there was a meeting room opened by the Jemaat Ahmadiyya Indonesia in the Yogyakarta area through the practice of Chai Time.

The Chai Time is a good example of the practice of hospitality as obtained from the perspective of Marianne Moyaert, that there is hermeneutic openness and openness as appreciation in these activities. It can also be concluded that Chai Time at the Ahmadiyya congregation can be a humanist alternative to religion in society because there is an urge to know and understand each other between religions without letting go of their identity. This form of hospitality is also a picture that goes beyond tolerance in establishing social and religious relations in Indonesia.

## **Acknowledgments**

On this occasion, the research team would like to thank the committee of The 1st International Conference on Cultural & Languages (ICCL) with the theme “Glocal (Global & Local) Reinforcement of Religious Tolerance in Post Pandemic Era” Faculty of Cultures and Languages UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, who has allowed us to share and discuss the results of this research as a scientific work.

Then to the parties who have supported this research process, namely: the leaders of the Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia in Yogyakarta, in this case, Maulana Murtiyono Yusuf Ismail (Mln. Murti), Shakeel Ahmad, and Muhammad Ghifari Misbahuddin. Then to Ahmad Shalahuddin Mansur, and also to all (individually and community) who took part in discussions related to this research.

## **References**

Ahmad, S. A. & C. T. (2021). Dialog JAI Jogja Dengan Trustbuilding Indonesia. Ahmadiyah.Id.

- Dister, N. S. (2010). DIALOG ANTAR UMAT BERAGAMA Ketegangan antara keterbukaan dan identitas. *Limen Jurnal Agama Dan Kebudayaan*, 6(2), 48–67.
- Epafras, L. C. (2020). Pandemi Tak Kunjung Padam: Corona, Kon Ora dan Keramahan Organik. In L. C. Epafras (Ed.), *CORONA vs KON ORA. Refleksi Teologi Keramatamahan dalam Konteks Pandemi*. (Pertama, p. 11). CV. Alaf Media.
- Faiz, A. A. (2018). Pemuda Ahmadi sebagai Agen Sosial Transformatif. In A. A. Faiz (Ed.), *Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia* (pp. 65–88). Institute of Southeast Asian Islam.
- Fatubun, A. (2017). Jemaat Ahmadiyah Ukir Rekor MURI Donor Mata Terbanyak. Ayo Indonesia. <https://bogor.ayoindonesia.com/nasional/pr-31865341/Jemaat-AhmadiyahUkir-Rekor-MURI-Donor-Mata-Terbanyak>
- Ghifari, M. (2022). Terkesan dengan Program Chai-Time, Dua Mahasiswa Lakukan Riset di Ahmadiyah Yogyakarta. *Warta Ahmadiyah*. <https://wartaahmadiyah.org/terkesandengan-program-chai-time-dua-mahasiswa-lakukan-riset-di-ahmadiyah-yogyakarta.html>
- Khiththathi. (2018). Chai, Gaya Hidup Orang India. *Acehkitacom*. <https://acehkita.com/chaigaya-hidup-orang-india/>
- Kristiawan, D. (2020). Merengkuh Yang Lain: Dialog Interreligius Dan Transformasi Diri Terhadap Yang Lain. *Mitra Sriwijaya: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.46974/ms.v1i1.4>
- Moyaert, M. (2011). *Fragile Identities Towards a Theology of Interreligious Hospitality*. Rodopi.
- Rohmawati, W. S. A. (2018). Dari Donor Darah ke Clean the City. In A. A. Faiz (Ed.), *Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia* (pp. 147–175). Institute of Southeast Asian Islam.
- Sulistiyati, M. (2019). Love for All Hatred for None: Narasi Damai Khilafah Ahmadiyah Kontemporer. In A. A. Faiz (Ed.), *Khilafah Ahmadiyah dan Nation State* (pp. 47–75). Institute of Southeast Asian Islam.
- "*Tentang Kami*." (2022). Humanity First Indonesia. <https://humanityfirst.id/>

## Biography

### First Author

Gerry Nelwan, S.Pd., MAPS.

Student of Postgraduate Study, majoring in Master of Arts in Peace Studies

Faculty of Theology UKDW Yogyakarta

Indonesia

Gerry Nelwan is a Master of Arts in Peace Studies student at the Postgraduate, Duta Wacana Christian University, Yogyakarta (2022). Some of the latest studies are Interreligious Solidarity in Building Community Resilience in the Era of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Manado City (2021); Identity Politics and Interreligious Relations: Analyzing the 2020 Election in Manado City (2022).

Email: [gerrynelwan11@gmail.com](mailto:gerrynelwan11@gmail.com)

### Second Author

Gerald Moratua Siregar, S.Th.

Student of Postgraduate Study, majoring in Master of Philosophy

Faculty of Theology UKDW Yogyakarta

Indonesia

Gerald M. Siregar is a postgraduate student of the Faculty of Theology, Duta Wacana Christian University, Yogyakarta. Some of the latest publications are “Lelaki Penenun: Menjalankan atau Menyalahi Kodrat Allah? Sebuah Rekonstruksi Sosial Budaya tentang Gender” (published by Pute Waya: Sociology of Religion Journal vol. 3 no. 1, IAKN Manado, 2022); “Meretas Pemikiran Ekumenisme Eka Darmaputera” (published by Matheteuo: Religious Studies vol. 2 no. 1, IAKN Kupang, 2022).

Email: [geraldonk@gmail.com](mailto:geraldonk@gmail.com)