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## SECULARIZATION AND LIBERALIZATION AS CONTROVERSY AND URGENCY

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### **Abstract**

*This study aims at explaining the notion that religion must be able to face various challenges of developing ideas because the religion that is rahmatan lil 'alamin (compassion for the universe) should not sealed itself off, be reluctant to, or even reject the developing discourse. Especially if the development of thought regarding furu'iyah matters (differences) do not conflict with the basic principles of religion. Thus, the problems discussed in the research include why Islamic societies oppose and reject the notions of secularism and liberalism? Hence, the questions were formulated as follows: how does Islamic society respond to the notions of secularism and liberalism? And how is the urgency of religion in interpreting and accepting secularism and liberalism? This research is a deconstructive study of Islamic thought from which it found out the sense behind the mainstream meanings in order to realize universal Islam. Secularism and liberalism are considerations for religion to deal with various problems faced by their adherents.*

**Keywords:** *Religion, Modernization, Secularization, and Liberalization*

### **Introduction**

Sociologists say that numerous modern state societies are still religious, both individually and constitutionally (Islam as the official state religion), such as Libya and Malaysia (Rachmatulloh, 2021). In contrast, there are also many countries that have declared themselves secular but are still not classified as developed countries, such as Morocco, Turkey and Egypt. In addition, secularism as a political ideology basically cannot be combined with the true teachings of Islam, which regard political power as a means of upholding religion.

In European Christian history, secular and liberal terms were interpreted as liberating society from the grip of church power, which was very strong and hegemonic in the Middle Ages. The next process was not only in the socio-political field, but also related to the methodology of religious understanding, for example the emergence of Liberal Jewish with Abraham Geiger as its figure (Arifinsyah, 2014) as well as the spread of liberal theology in Christianity. The history of liberalism which includes religious liberalism is a new milestone for the history of Western life and because of that it is called the Enlightenment Period, the struggle for freedom began to be revived. The emergence of religious liberalization in the Western world was due to the

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disappointment with the doctrines and history of religion. The process of secularization and liberalization in religion was then globalized and promoted to other religions including Islam.

Besides being characterized by freedom of thought for individuals, liberalism has an intention to realize a free society. Liberalism rejects restrictions, especially for government and religion. There are three things that are fundamental to the ideology of liberalism: life, freedom, and right of ownership (Thalib, 2016).

The way Muslims perceiving their religion which is influenced by Western liberalism is called liberal Islam. Liberal Islamic thought is a new school of thought among Muslims (Ismail & Stapa, 2019). The principles adopted by liberal Islam emphasize personal freedom and liberation from oppressive social and political structures. The trend of liberal Islamic thought is a global phenomenon which occurs in almost all parts of the Islamic world. It spreads to every line of life of Muslim society along with the rapid expansion of Western neo-imperialism which was made in the name of globalization and the fight against terrorism (Syafrin, 2009).

When it is examined carefully, it is obvious that almost all liberal movements in the Islamic world, including in Indonesia, were born from ideological responses to various social, political, and economic problems that are currently plaguing their society (Syafrin, 2009). This group is trying to make a new breakthrough to revive a society that has been left behind when compared to the Western world. This breakthrough should start from religion because religion (Islam) has been a barrier to progress and accelerated development in Arabian and Muslim societies.

In Indonesia, the emergence of this liberalization movement is also inseparable from the multi-dimensional problems that are currently entangling the Indonesians. In particular, this group has positioned itself as a response and reaction to a new phenomenon labeled as radicalism and Islamic fundamentalism which began to flourish with the fall of the New Order regime (Syafrin, 2009). This latest group has been persistently trying to establish Islamic law as positive law in the Indonesian government. This liberal movement is nothing but a continuation of reform efforts initiated by Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, Ahmad Wahid, Djohan Effendi, Harun Nasution, and others.

Based on the background above, the question is why do Islamic societies reject secularism and liberalism? It was then narrowed down into: how is the response of the religious community (Islam) to the notion of secularism and liberalism? How should religious communities deal with secularism and liberalism? A deconstructive approach concerning Islamic thoughts was used to conduct this study, in order to explore the sense behind mainstream meanings.

## **B. Discussion**

### **1. Secularism and Liberalism as Controversy**

Discourses of religious pluralism, liberalism, and secularism are still controversial issues in Indonesia. Religious pluralism teaches that all adherents of religions will go to heaven and live side by side there (Indonesia, 2011, p. 93). Religious liberalism understands religious texts (Quran and Sunnah) by using an open mind; and only accept religious doctrines that are in accordance with their ideas. Religious secularism is separating world affairs from religion; religion is only used to regulate personal relationships with God, while human relations are regulated based on social agreements (Indonesia, 2011).

Indonesian Muslims are facing a “non-physical war” called *ghazwu al-fiker* (war of thoughts), (Fathurrohman, 2017). This war of thoughts has a broad impact on the teachings, beliefs, and diversity of the people. The notions of religious secularism and liberalism, two ideas that came from the West, have recently developed among certain groups in Indonesia. These two schools of thought have deviated from the principles of Islamic teachings and damaged people’s beliefs and understanding of Islamic teachings.

Religious secularism and liberalism are considered to have distorted Islamic teachings in such a way, causing people to doubt the faith and worship in Islam; such as thoughts about religious relativism, disclaimer, and denial of the existence of God’s law, and replacing it with laws resulting from mere reasoning (Fathurrohman, 2017). This free interpretation of religion and without guiding principles has also given rise to the notion of *Ibahiyah/ permissivism* (justifying all actions) related to ethics and religion, as well as other impacts.

Anis Malik Thoha and Adian Husaini consider that religious pluralism, secularism, and liberalism are understandings that reduce religions with a number of concepts and characteristics such as relativism, syncretism, and perennialism. Apart from that, the concepts of religious pluralism, secularism, and liberalism, harbor hidden agendas from the West and Christians to attack Islam (Husaini, 2005, p. 70-76; Thoha, 2005, p. 48). This conflict between East and West has been ridiculed by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, whose character was considered to be western. In his article entitled Towards a New Society and Culture, he wrote;

“... Our nation’s society and culture, which must grow towards the West in this way, may arouse the anger of some groups who accidentally and unwittingly lull the masses of people to sleep with empty and meaningless words: the East is gentle, while the West is selfish, materialistic, and intellectualistic. Those who think that Easterners are holy saints and all Westerners are heartless criminals, will surely be surprised to hear statements that say that Easterners must learn from Westerners. 9).

Religious groups that reject the notions of secularism and liberalism have mapped out several problems caused by these notions (Dachrud & Mantu, 2019), including: First; rejecting the laws revealed by Allah, getting rid of sharia from all aspects of life, replacing divine revelations with

positive laws that they adopted from disbelievers who were enemies to Allah and His Messenger. Second; changing and manipulating Islamic history and giving a picture (impression) of the golden age of the Islamic liberation movement as an age of savagery full of chaos and personal ambitions.

Third; undermining the education system and using it to spread secular thoughts. It is done by spreading secular ideas that become material for students, reducing the hours of lessons devoted to religious material, forbidding the study of certain texts which reveal secular misunderstandings, changing sharia texts with haphazard and incomplete explanations. Get rid of teachers who adhere to religious teachings from their teaching duties, making religious material as additional material.

Fourth; eliminate the difference between Muslims and non-believers. Fifth; promoting a permissive culture, through: Laws that legalize immoral acts, various kinds of information media both online and offline, rejecting the obligation to wear the hijab, and wear non-sharia clothes instead, and implementing free intermingling between men and women in educational institutions.

Sixth; against Islamic dawah movement by reducing the availability of Islamic books, as well as providing easy access for books containing things that deviate from Islamic teachings, and facilitating secular figures. Seventh; arrest dawah activists, make enemies, and make false accusations against them. Eighth; undermine Muslim figures who do not want to make peace with secular ideology, by means of isolation or imprisonment. Ninth; reject the obligation of jihad in the way of Allah. Tenth; express fanaticism towards the nation and homeland (Sharif, n.d., p. 36-44).

Thus, a series of perceptions by the public and Islamic intellectuals reject and even oppose secularism and liberalism in the Islamic world. The fear of destroying the foundations of religion with the ideology of secularism and liberalism is the fundamental reason for rejection. There is misunderstanding of some religious experts in seeing the methodology of secular and liberal groups in understanding religion. Religious people do not understand the substance and have not made adjustments to the positive meaning of secularism and liberalism.

## **2. The Urgency of Secularization and Liberalization in Religion**

The secularization thesis advanced by modern scientific thinkers such as Karl Max, August Comte, and Sigmund Freud, that religion will decline and lose its social relevance in public along with the process of modernity, is questioned (Hudaeri, 2018). According to Jose Casanova, the secularization thesis put forward by the founding fathers of social science thinkers is full of inconsistencies and is not supported by empirical evidence, but it is more in the imagination of modern thinkers about the world they dream of (Casanova, 1994, p. 11- 17). Religion still has

relevance to modern life due to two things; first, modern countries themselves need religion to maintain their national unity and promote social transformation; second, the religious elites themselves carry out the power and rationality of modern life.

From global perspective, religion is not in decline. According to Casanova, since World War II, religion has grown all over the world except in a few areas, such as: Western Europe and communist countries. Even in Japan and the United States, two developed countries with enormous economic power, modernization has not hindered the development of religion. Therefore, continued Casanova, the argument that industrialization, urbanization, and the spread of science through the educational process encourages the decline of religion is a thesis that is now being questioned (Casanova, 1994), it was also recognized by Peter L Berger. The empirical development of religious revival in several countries in the world admits “a big mistake made by almost everyone who worked in this area of study in the 1950s and 1960s was believing that modernity caused the decline of religion.” (Berger, 1999, p. 1-18).

According to Fazlur Rahman, religious liberalism is a critical attitude in interpreting religious texts contextually. This effort is necessary to avoid historical dogmatism which hinders Muslims from progressing (Rahman, 1982, p. 141-145). The principle of religious liberalism when drawn into an Islamic context, can be found in the *ra'yu* sect as detailed by Ahmad Sahal: First, religious texts do not totally regulate life because what is most important is not the technical provisions in the literal text which cover all life, but the principle of universal morality which becomes *maqashid al-sharia*. Second, respect for the main role of common sense in interpreting texts automatically respects human pluralism because the historical context that underlies it is also plural. Third, texts are always interpreted texts. Even literal understanding is a form of interpretation, while interpretation is always relative. Human-made meanings are not absolute but contingent, and present various meanings (Sahal, 2002, p. 6-7).

Freedom of expression, particularly regarding religion, is a characteristic of liberalism which upholds freedom of expression and freedom to adhere to certain forms of life. Tolerance towards a variety of different opinions about religion is an important concept, therefore a theological foundation is needed as its base. According to Muhammad Legenhausen, this effort then gave rise to pluralism which was later used to attack religious authority and the stability of truth claims that exist in every religion (Legenhausen, 2010, p. 9-16).

The mainstream currents in the Muslim community generally understand religious pluralism, not in the sense of acknowledging the truth that each religion brings as the way to God, but only in terms of tolerance and harmony among religious adherents. Thus far, the concept of tolerance between religious communities ethically functions to bridge the various interests of religious groups as well as a universal value in establishing co-existence and interaction between different religions and cultures. Up to this stage, religious pluralism is at its most subtle meaning, namely

as a response to beliefs, practices, symbols, or attributes that are different and considered deviant. This response is still shown without using coercive ways, it allows diversity and adapting to live side by side, instead. (Little, 2001, p. 9).

Religious pluralism is often connoted as relativism; opinion put forward by John Hick about the duality of truth; first; is absolute when the truth is only within the circle of groups or people who believe it, second; it is relative when viewed from outside the group. What is considered the truth by one person may not be considered the truth by another person. Basically, truth is present in human perception and everyone has an equal right to believe something as the truth (Hick, 1989, p. 241).

Every religion has exclusive truth claims, and Islam is no exception, such as the claim that truth only belongs to Allah Himself, thus Islam is the only true religion, although various religions can be found in every historical period (‘Imarah, 1997, p. 322 -323; Mutahhari, 2004, p. 47). These claims originate from knowledge in religion that is transmitted and preserved from generation to generation by religious authorities. However, religious pluralism seeks to suppress and eliminate all forms of exclusivity in religions with the jargon that all religions are the same, there are many paths to God, even state that the truth brought by religion is relative. This is a form of reduction where religious pluralism is as a theology of tolerance, which turns out to be intolerant of the very real sides of exclusivity that can be found in religions (Legenhausen, 2010).

Exclusive claims in religion are seen as natural instruments and are very important for self and group identification in order to oppose the claims of other people to absolute truth, according to Abdul Aziz Sachedina’s view, this is a fundamental problem in the formulation of classical political identity: religious authoritarianism based on claims of exclusive salvation. In addition, exclusive claims are an effective tool in the interests of legitimacy and integration because these claims make their members a practical means of confirming collective communal identity. Such a basic identity can also be used as a motive-and therefore plays a big role-in order to attack people who do not follow the solidarity of the faithful and to instill hegemony over other groups (Sachedina, 2001, p. 60-61).

Farid Esack states that pluralism characterizes the existence of plurality in which, of course, there are differences. Therefore, it is necessary to have an attitude of acceptance and positive interaction. Acceptance in question is acknowledging, understanding, and respecting the existence of the other by being actively involved in establishing communication, interacting in an inclusive manner, and coexisting in society (Compare with several concepts of pluralism summarized by Alwi Shihab. See Esack, 1988, p. xii; Shihab, 1999, p. 39-41).

Religious pluralism in the theological context means the awareness that each religion has its own prophets, teachings, and rituals that differ from one religion to another (Sumbulah, 2015).

Whereas in the sociological context, there is a demand for active involvement from all levels of religious adherents to build a togetherness by which a nation can grow well and be able to produce great works for humanity (Madjid, 1996, p. 57).

The unity of authority between politics and religion results in political issues being seen as religious issues and vice versa. Meanwhile, the development of liberalism shook the concept of the unity of authority, then gave rise to secularism, the spirit of freedom of thought such as freedom of speech, expression, and carrying out religious practices. Therefore, this requires separation between religious and political affairs in the private and public spheres. A process in which social and cultural sectors are released from the domination of religious institutions and symbols, undoubtedly requires open, critical, and rational mind.

There are at least four characteristics of secularization identified by Donald Smith: first; separation of the political universe from ideology and religious organizational structures; second; political expansion to carry out regulatory functions in socio-economic areas that were previously under the jurisdiction of religion; third; demystification of political culture to emphasize non-transcendental temporal goals, as well as rational and pragmatic ways; fourth; political domination of religious beliefs, practices, and organizations (Quoted from Latif, 2007, p. 6-7; Smith, 1970, p. 85-87).

Some believe that secularism is a closed ideology that is anti-religious, excludes religion from the public sphere, and distances society from God. According to Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, this definition turned out to be invalid, even to be applied to western countries which are considered secular (An-Na'im, 2008, p. 3-5). Secularism in the West has gone through a process of social transformation over several centuries, not being imported from outside or applied by force from the authority, but emerged organically from the society. In contrast to Muslim communities, both in the Middle East and Asia, secularism is not the product of socio-economic, technological, or cultural changes, not related to the internal dynamics of the community. Secularism exists to support the long-term plans of the colonialization project. Therefore, the rejection of secularism in the Islamic world is the reflection of postcolonial countries (Hashemi, 2009, p. 141).

Secularism requires the state to be neutral and not on any religion's side. However, the impartiality of the state does not mean it is in a neutral position because the state also plays a role in the politicization of religion. Jane Monnig Atkinson argues that religion in the Indonesian context is biased and has a narrower scope of meaning because it is understood as religions approved by the state. People who are religious mean that they have embraced one of the official religions, while those who are not yet religious are people who have not converted themselves into state-recognized religions. The implication is that a person is not recognized as having a religion by the state if he has not adhered to the official religion (Atkinson, 1987, p. 177).

Indonesian Muslims' rejection of liberalism, pluralism, and secularism can actually be understood as common sense. This is none other than because there has been what Charles Kurzman called a parallel debate between three traditions of socio-religious interpretation; Indigenous, revivalist, and liberal Islam since more than two centuries ago, in every region of the Islamic world. These three types of traditions provide a variety of perspectives that are significant for the history of Islamic discourse today.

It should be explained that the secularization that occurred in the Islamic world was very different from that which occurred in the Western world. Secularization in the West began with the separation of science, politics, and world affairs from religion and ended with the separation of science from the church. As for secularization in Islam, it begins with releasing the ummah from the bonds of tradition including religious teachings resulting from the understanding of the predecessors, not sacred, and ends with the return of Muslims to the Al-Quran and Al-Hadith.

Secularization means the liberation of Muslims from the bondage of religious teachings that are not fundamental, are relative in nature, and are the product of the *ijtihad* of the previous scholars. As stated by Harun Nasution: liberating Muslims from attachment to *zhanni* religious teachings which are the understanding traditions of Muslims (Nasution, 1997, p. 10).

The liberation of Muslims is significant for several reasons; first; during the history of the Muslim community itself, many of them were unable to distinguish among considered-Islamic values; the transcendental, absolute, fundamental, temporal, and relative ones, which were the products of human thought in their time. Second; Secularization is also very important because thoughts cannot develop, and they cannot even question the provisions of tradition which were the products of previous scholars. Third; in order to realize universal understanding, especially to some concepts that are often misunderstood and to bring in Islam rahmatan lil'alam.

### **3. The Significance of Secularization and Liberalization in Religion**

#### **a. Disengagement from Traditions**

Secularism is an effort to liberate Muslims from distorted religious teachings which are relative in nature and the product of the *ijtihad* of previous scholars (Abidin, 2014). Freeing Muslims from attachment to religious teachings which are *zhanni* is a tradition of understanding of Muslims. Religious communities (especially Islam) are still shackled by religious teachings that are not fundamental, relative, the result of *ijtihad*, considered the only truth, and there is no possibility of truth other than what they understand. While the previous scholars always opened the door to receive different opinions from the *ijtihad* they produced, because scholars realize that the conditions when they produce products of thought/*ijtihad* are very much different from the current context.



Carrying out *turats* the same as those practiced by the Prophet and his companions is an ideology shared by the majority of Muslims. It cannot be contested let alone replaced with other understandings and practices. *Turats* is the only truth that must be implemented by religious people (Islam), in such a way that all changes that approach it (*turats*) must be opposed or rejected.

Positioning *turats* in their place is a necessity, that a lot of good things have been produced by *turats* and can still be utilized in the current conditions. It is even possible that it could serve as a guideline in the future. Thus, taking the virtues of *turats* and accepting change from progress is a wise attitude for every believer of religion, so that religious people are free from fanaticism.

### **b. Rational Interpretation of Islamic Teachings**

God wants humans to think and act rationally, by utilizing the intellect that God has bestowed for the task of improving the general needs of humanity. Based on the teachings of the Quran that believers must use faith and reason in all aspects of life.

Is one who is obedient to Allah, prostrating himself or standing (in prayer) during the hours of the night, fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the Mercy of his Lord (like one who disbelieves)? Say: "Are those who know equal to those who know not?" It is only men of understanding who will remember.

Liberal Islam believes that *ijtihad* or rational reasoning on Islamic texts is the main principle that allows Islam to continue to survive in all situations and conditions (Kalingga, 2020). Closing the door of *ijtihad*, either in a limited way or as a whole, is a threat to Islam itself, because that is how Islam decays. Liberal Islam believes that *ijtihad* can be carried out in all aspects, both in terms of *muamalat* (social interaction), *ubudiyyat* (rituals), and *ilahiyyat* (theology).

*Ijtihad* developed by liberal Islam is an attempt to interpret the Quran based on the religio-ethical spirit of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet, not interpreting Islam solely based on the literal meaning of the text which only paralyzes Islam. Religio-active spirit, Islam lives and develops creatively to become part of universal human civilization.

Liberal Islam bases itself on the idea of truth (in religious interpretation) as something relative, (Kalingga, 2020) because an interpretation is a confined human activity. Every form of interpretation contains the possibility of being wrong, in addition to the possibility of being right, because religious interpretation, in one and another way, is a reflection of the needs of an interpreter in certain time and circumstances.

This means that an interpreter in understanding the verses of the Quran, at the time and condition he is present, is undoubtedly born from an interest and the intervention of certain groups and interests. Legitimizing the understanding of a person or group according to inclinations, or in the context of defending society, as well as to ensure comfort and continuity of social life, then

realizing Islamic universalism is a necessity. Taking the position of liberalism is a necessity to guarantee Islam as a religion that brings mercy to the universe.

### **c. Religious Pluralism**

Pluralism is the biggest contribution of secularism and liberalism and has changed Islamic society widely. The facts about the encouragement of pluralism and the encouragement of Muslims to take a pluralist and inclusive attitude towards others did not arise by chance. However, it is more than the result of a political position in which it is a joint product between Islamic teachings and Western thought.

Pluralism can be explained as follows: first, there is an understanding of cultural relativity. Cultural pluralism is the most elementary reality, therefore it cannot be avoided by anyone, for example people cannot choose the parents, to be born in a certain ethnic community, race, or have particular complexion. It has been arranged by God in the best way, humans must accept it gracefully because all of that is unavoidable things in life. Differences in good and bad or right and wrong judgments are usually determined based on differences in cultural backgrounds (Zubair, 2003, p. 115-120).

Second, the understanding of normative relativity to the understanding of normative pluralism. In this case, there is a hint that different interpretations and meanings of the same universal value can occur due to differences in perception. In fact, what is called perception does not know wrong and right, perception will only present differences that are not fundamental. This can happen because there are differences in experience, ability and way of dealing with problems. Normative plurality is accidental, not substantial. Universally, there are agreed upon values, but differences in interpretation of the agreed upon principles are unavoidable. Dealing with a phenomenon like this requires a social ethical approach, not a faith approach which tends to close itself off and is only appropriate for internal interests. This is where the importance of dialogue and partnership which implicitly contains the communication of two different but equal parties.

According to Syahrin Harahap, the face of pluralism in society can be distinguished in five parts; First, moral pluralism, namely the existence of an invitation to spread tolerance among religious adherents. Second, religious pluralism (Soteriological religious pluralism), namely the understanding that other religions can also obtain salvation. Third, epistemological pluralism (epistemological religious pluralism), there are claims that adherents of certain religions have more solid justification for their faith than adherents of other religions. Fourth, alethic religious pluralism, that is, the truth in one religion must be found in other religions to the same degree. Fifth, deontic pluralism (deontic religious pluralism), pluralism which involves God's commands (Harahap, 2011, p. 152).

Religion is sometimes like a double-edged sword, on the one hand religion becomes a social binder and becomes a symbolic structure of the collective memory of its adherents. On the other hand, the concrete identity of religion can cause problems, because religion also acts as an ideology which means providing an interpretive framework for understanding the world and in interpreting social relations. Meaning or interpretation tends to hide interests. Concealment of interests cannot be separated from efforts to integrate and justify domination. What is interpreted and justified by religion is the relationship of power. Every action and power always seek legitimacy. Power demands more than belief. To fill the gap, religion acts as a domination justification system. Thus, if religious identity is threatened, it is tantamount to threatening the social status, stability, and existence of its adherents. Thus, anyone who is considered threatening will be resisted even to the point of murder.

Third, an understanding of meta-ethical relativism which leads to an understanding of the existence of substantive plurality. Every human being, both individually and in groups, and nations, must have the principles of truth that are believed to be able to solve problems, which of course may be different from other nations. Indonesia has *Pancasila* which in principle must be believed in its ideological truth by the Indonesians themselves, even though there is an understanding that there are differences that give birth to substantive plurality with other nations which is impossible to avoid. Ideology basically must answer the challenges of ideality, reality, and flexibility. *Pancasila* as the state ideology has proven to be able to face these challenges because it is built from religious values, beliefs, language, customs, and culture of the Indonesian nation in general (Sunoto, 1982, p. 94). Thus, realistically the plural Indonesian society is still framed by *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) and bound by the state ideology: *Pancasila*.

#### **d. Human Rights**

The term human rights began to be widely used when World War II ended. The term was made general by the United Nations in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, issued in 1948. As a term, human rights replaces “natural rights”, a very old concept, and the expression “human rights” (rights of man) does not necessarily cover women’s rights. (Masykuri Abdillah, 2014, p. 3)

The modern development of the concept of human rights began to grow at the end of the European Middle Ages, called the Renaissance, when resistance to economic and political tyranny began to surface. The notion of human rights as creatures with high dignity is the result of the interaction of European (Western) civilization with Greek and Islamic civilizations. This thought was then developed in the environment of Western civilization (AKRIM, 2022).

In the Islamic world, the struggle for human rights has developed quantitatively and qualitatively, especially in the last three decades. The issues that were developed varied from emphasizing the

necessity of democracy to the issue of gender. In Iran, for example, the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI) was founded in 1961. In the Arab world, one of the most important human rights organizations is *Association de Défense des Droits de L'homme et des Libertés Démocratiques dans le Monde Arabe* (Association for the Defence of Human Rights and Democratic Freedom in the Arab World) founded in January 1983 in Paris, and inaugurated in November 1983 across the Arab World. In addition to the organizations mentioned above, several Muslim figures who have worked intensely in fighting for human rights include Abdullah al-Na'im, Roger Garudy, Riffat Hassan, and Chandra Muzaffar (Komaruddin Hidayat and Ahmad Gaus (ed.), 2005).

In fact, four countries in Southeast Asia region: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, represented by their respective ministers of religion, agreed to realize a resolution containing seven points on human rights from an Islamic perspective. First, Muslims are expected to equip themselves with the right knowledge and skills through reliable sources to face new doctrines and challenges. This is to ensure that the rights fought for are in accordance with principles and are free from elements that conflict with Islam. Second, the need to empower the commitment to religious life as a way of life, in order to ensure that every individual Muslim is able to respond to the realities of today's life which is pivotal to the principles and guidelines of Islamic teachings. Third, seeking common ground for human values such as dignity and honor, independence and freedom, equality and brotherhood as a basis for opportunities to work together to deal with human rights issues in line with Islam. Fourth, disseminating understanding of Islam as a system of values and ethics, which contributes to the common good. Fifth, strengthening the struggle for human rights in line with Islamic demands, based on a strategy of emphasizing Islamic principles as an ethical system on human rights, increasing public understanding of human rights principles according to Islamic ethics, and increasing the effectiveness of cooperation networks among religious authorities in every country, organizations, and individuals, in order to strengthen the struggle for human rights issues from an Islamic perspective. Sixth, being ready to collaborate on programs explaining human rights from an Islamic point of view through strategic cooperation among member countries. Seventh, the forum agreed to write down the concept of human rights from an Islamic point of view that was presented at this conference to be published on behalf of MABIMS (Forum of Ministers of Religion of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore) as a source of information for researchers which can be used as a reference at the level of member countries, as well as the international community.

## **Conclusion**

There is no religion in this world that is immune to change. The ability of religion to interpret all forms of change will provide resistance to that religion, especially in relation to tradition which is the process by which religious communities understand their religious teachings, except for

religion in the sense of doctrine, the provisions of religion are considered permanent and unchanging for its adherents.

Modernity, with a series of changes it offers to religion, still faces challenges from religious communities up to the last decade. This paper proposes that secularism and liberalism, as implications of modernity, are urgency for religion to take part in order to deliver religious teachings as universal moral foundations. The positive meanings of the ideology of secularism and liberalism must become a substantial study in religion.

This study has a number of limitations in terms of sources and cases. Moreover, it is also too qualitative. In line with that, further research that is able to accommodate more information and involve more complete parties is needed, in order to obtain more comprehensive and in-depth results which allows it to be used as the basis for policy.

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