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SEEKING THE MIDDLE GROUND IN PRECARIOUS DEMOCRACY: INTERFAITH ENGAGEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIAN AND TURKISH SOCIETIES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF DECLARATION OF HUMAN FRATERNITY

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Abstracts:

As the two most populous Muslim nations carrying the status of precarious democracy, Indonesia and Türkiye are still trying to be committed to their credentials as nations that hold dear their multireligious community. While Indonesia follows the value of Pancasila to keep interfaith and intercultural solidarity, Türkiye still considers the value of secularism as a core concept to equally treat diverse religious and cultural communities of Türkiye. Interestingly, while interfaith engagement in the context of Indonesia is much stronger and visible, discussions about interfaith engagements in Türkiye have been refrained due to several reasons. This paper will explore the dynamics of interfaith engagements in Indonesia and Türkiye, especially between Muslims and Christians (particularly in the case of Catholics) after the Declaration of Human Fraternity between the Vatican and al-Azhar through the theory of interfaith engagement and the theory of democratic citizenship.

Keywords:

Democratic citizenship, interfaith engagement, democratization, Türkiye, Indonesia.

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INTRODUCTION

> "The future of Indonesia as a nation and as a country, and even the future of our world, depends on whether the quality of relations between religious communities are good or bad." Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo, SJ (Archbishop of Jakarta).[1]

> "I saw that in the tragedy that united us in life and in death we were truly able, both with our Muslim brothers and with our Orthodox brothers, to unite and collaborate. This is how I conceive interreligious dialogue, in life. We can also continue to discuss various topics at an academic level, but we have many opportunities to remain united." Bishop Antuan Ilgit SJ (Auxillary Bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of Anatolia)[2]

The agreement between Al-Azhar and the Holy See under the Declaration of Human Fraternity (DHF) has provided a new moment of engagement between Catholic and Muslim communities all across the World to create better cohesiveness and integrity in the countries in which they are living. Especially after the declaration of Fratelli tutti (FT) encyclics by Pope Francis in 2020, many local initiatives kickstarted by the local Catholic parish to connect more with interfaith platforms and multiple religious organizations. Stronger engagements could be particularly witnessed in Muslim-majority countries and Catholic-majority countries, such as Indonesia and the Philippines[3]. In the United Arab Emirates, the country where the agreement was signed, interfaith

1 Suharyo, Ignatius. *The Catholic Way: Kekatolikan dan Keindonesiaan Kita*. Yogyakarta:Penerbit Kanisius, 2009: p. 71

2 Antonella Pallermo, "The Jesuit Ilgit, Auxiliary Bishop of Anatolia: To Be a Bridge Between the Church and Turkey," *Italy24*, September 2023, https://news.italy24.press/world/818265.html.

3 Hans A. Harmakaputra, "Fratelli Tutti and Interreligious Friendship: An Indonesian Christian Reflection," *The Journal of Social Encounters* 5, no. 1 (2021): 14-18; Jonathan James Canete and Fides A. del Castillo, "Pakikipagkapwa (Fellowship): Towards an Interfaith Dialogue with the Religious Others," *Religions* 13, no. 5 (2022): 459.

initiatives based on the DHF had been implemented at various levels, especially in the context of people-to-people relations. The programs conducted at the local level were intended to make people aware of diversity and to normalize acceptance towards this religious diversity. In some cases, the governmental authorities also supported this initiative by creating projects and facilitating meetings through formal or informal organizational platforms.

The theological and theoretical expositions made by Muslim and Catholic figures upon the initiatives made under DHF are also important to be observed. Abdullah Alamadi argued that while the DHF could serve as a strong opposition towards the exploitation of religious belief and (mis)interpretation in allowing extremism and violent practices, he also reminded that the parties to the DHF should consider the importance of fostering respect towards democracy, freedom of expression and human rights to enhance more honest and grounded interreligious relations[4]. On the other hand, Esam Muhammad Abdul Qader said that the DHF should be seen as a necessity for human development and human security. Approaches promoted by DHF could manage differences between religious communities and mitigate any potential conflicts stemming from these differences so that religious communities throughout the globe would be using DHF as a normative guideline for collaboration[5]. The two largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, are also receptive to the DHF.

4 Abdullah Alamadi, "Wathiqah al-Ukhuwwah al-Insaniyyah wa Tanaqudhat Abu Dhabi [Document of Human Fraternity and Contradictions of Abu Dhabi]," *Aljazeera.net*, February 5, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.net/politics/2019/2/5/%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88-%D8%B8%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%87%D8%B1.

5 Esam Muhammad Abdul Qader, "Wathiqah al-Ukhuwwah Mathlub Insaniy [Document of Brotherhood is a Demand for Humanity]," *Al-Yaum as-Sabi' (Youm7.com)*, December 22, 2022, https://www.youm7.com/story/2022/12/28/%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A8-%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%89/6024777.

Moreover, the responses towards DHF are implemented quickly enough by Nahdlatul Ulama into a more operative level that entails an effort to involve religious organizations and clerics in the strategic policy-making process, both at the national and international levels. This could be especially seen in the case of how Yahya Cholil Staquf, the Chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama, conceptualized and brought forward the creation of Religious-20 (R-20), a sideline event of Global-20 (G-20) which was inspired by the DHF[6]. The implementation of R-20 at the global level was also followed by the implementation of a regional framework on interreligious dialogue, known as ASEAN-IIDC (ASEAN Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue Conference)[7]. However, many other Muslim intellectuals were less optimistic about the implementation of DHF and strategic forums based on the idea of DHF. Some have argued that DHF and forums inspired by it as a continuation of the 'Islamic moderation' project, initially implemented by the United States and its allies to counter 'violent extremism' and to discipline the Muslim society to adjust their way of thinking according to the values of Western democracy[8]. Many Muslim figures in the Muslim world also argued that the DHF is also a continuation of 'Catholic missionary' that would eventually disrupt the cohesiveness of Muslim society.

On another aspect, there were also several commentaries made by some sceptics within the Catholic theologians on the implementation of DHF. Some figures saw this venture made by Pope Francis as a fatal compromise to the Catholic faith. These conservative theologians saw that

6 Nahdlatul Ulama, "Setelah Vatikan, Dukungan Muktamar Internasional R20 Datang dari Liga Muslim Dunia," *Nahdlatul Ulama*, July 13, 2022, https://www.nu.or.id/internasional/setelah-vatikan-dukungan-muktamar-internasional-r20-datang-dari-liga-muslim-dunia-hRG4T.

7 Antara. "Forum ASEAN IIDC 2023 hasilkan Deklarasi Jakarta." Antara, August 7, 2023. https://www.antaranews.com/berita/3670713/forum-asean-iidc-2023- hasilkan-deklarasi-jakarta.

8 Sadek Hamid, "The Perils of Engaging CVE Policy Making: A British Case Study," *The Maydan*, December 4, 2019, https://themaydan.com/2019/12/the-perils-of-engaging-cve-policy-making-a-british-case-study/.; Lydia Wilson, "Gone to Waste: The 'CVE' Industry After 9/11," *New Lines Magazine*, September 10, 2021, https://newlinesmag.com/argument/understanding-the-lure-of-islamism-is-more-complex-than-the-experts-would-have-you-believe/.

DHF is akin to positioning the 'Islamic God' and 'Catholic God' in the same place, thus endangering the core of Catholic belief[9]. This concern was quite similar to those who opposed Nostra Aetate back in the 1970s, whereas some Catholic bishops and theologians thought that the credo of *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* (EENS) was being removed. Nostra Aetate formulated that there are also different ways existing in various religions that would open the path towards salvation, while still arguing that the most truthful way of salvation only existed according to the Catholic belief. Still, many Catholic bishops in Asia, America, Africa and the Middle East agreed that the DHF is a significant way of forging peace between Muslim and Christian communities, especially in areas prone to conflict which are based on religious and political factors. DHF could provide some moral and authoritative basis for the local religious communities to collaboratively resolve conflict and discover ways for constructing a common future for the diverse religious society (Higher Committee of Human Fraternity 2022; OPAPRU 2019)[10].

Looking at the diverse context and range of multiple opinions surrounding the DHF and its implementation, this research seeks to answer the question of how several Muslim countries, in the case of Indonesia and Türkiye, develop their notion of interreligious dialogue between Muslim and Christian dialogues. The reason behind the selection of Indonesia and Türkiye as study cases is that these countries are largely known as Muslim-majority countries which had a history of developing

9 FSSPX, "There Is No Common Faith in God Shared by Catholics and Muslims," *FSSPX*, August 3, 2020, https://fsspx.news/en/news/there-no-common-faith-god-shared-catholics-and-muslims-24640; Edward Pentin, "Does the New Catholic-Muslim Declaration Deviate From Catholic Teaching?," *National Catholic Register*, February 15, 2019, https://www.ncregister.com/news/does-the-new-catholic-muslim-declaration-deviate-from-catholic-teaching.

10 Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, "US Catholic Bishops Implement Document on Human Fraternity as Reference for National Interfaith Dialogues," *Higher Committee of Human Fraternity*, December 8, 2022, https://www.forhumanfraternity.org/us-catholic-bishops-implement-document-on-human-fraternity-as-reference-for-national-interfaith-dialogues/; OPAPRU, "Mindanao Religious Leaders Rally Behind 'Document on Human Fraternity' in the Wake of Suicide Bombings in Sulu," *OPAPRU*, August 14, 2019, https://peace.gov.ph/2019/08/mindanao-religious-leaders-rally-behind-document-on-human-fraternity-in-the-wake-of-suicide-bombings-in-sulu/.

interreligious dialogue with Christian communities, particularly with Catholics. This research will focus on the implementation of the DHF, in both countries but not necessarily limited to the after the implementation of DHF. The research will analyze the efforts of interreligious dialogue in Indonesia and Türkiye starting in 2010, and compare the instances of interreligious dialogue happening before the DHF and after the DHF. This research will also factor in states' and communities' responses towards the interreligious dialogue in general, and towards the DHF and its policy-level and societal-level implementation in particular. This research will also compare the context of interreligious dialogue in Indonesia and Türkiye, along with explanations of the opportunities and obstacles found throughout the implementation of interreligious dialogue in both countries, whether it is applied within the scope of DHF or not.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHOD

Conceptual Framework: Interreligious Engagement for Democratic Citizenship

Theory that will be used is the theory on interreligious engagement and its relations with the construction of democratic citizenship. This research argues that to construct a more democratic notion of citizenship, a dialogical notion of democracy needs to be nurtured amongst citizens. One of the most possible avenues to actualize dialogical democracy is through the establishment of interfaith dialogue platforms, which are mostly conducted by religious communities among themselves. In another way, the interfaith dialogue will also need democracy to sustain and make itself a genuine platform to exchange ideas and to be an open forum to explore differing opinions. Without democracy, the real spirit of interfaith dialogue which stands for open-mindedness and exchange of ideas will not be coming to real fruition. As in the condition of authoritarianism, interfaith dialogue might exist in

some different ways, but these dialogue platforms would eventually be used by the authoritarian government as a way to control their subject by imposing certain acceptable standards of citizenship and as a showcase to the international community to prove the imagery of 'authoritarian nation' as a tolerant nation. Thus, this research strongly defends the interconnectivity between democratization and interfaith dialogue as two inseparable elements in building a tolerant, open-minded and democratic society.

The connection between dialogical democracy and interfaith dialogue has been elaborated extensively in many journals. One of which is an article written by Stokke and Helskog that explores the case of interfaith dialogue in the Norwegian secondary education system[11]. Through an experiment of 'Dialogos' implemented by Helskog, Stokke and Helskog argued that the best way to promote better interfaith understanding and improve democracy is through dialogical democracy, which emphasizes the importance of reaching a consensus by debating various subjectivities that exist in each individual participating in the forum[12]. While deliberative democracy heavily relies on the supremacy of logic and conviction which eventually champion 'the strongest and the most logical argument', it is not the case with dialogical democracy which prioritizes sharing experiences, empathic views, and personal accountability that respect different opinions without necessarily needing to do confrontation. In this setting, following Parekh's arguments on constructing a multicultural society, participants of dialogical democracy are expected to have an open-ended discussion which doesn't need to have a clear summary. The result of such an open-ended discussion is to construct bridges and build trust between different identities. Personal experiences and reflection, not personal glory, is the way that would

11 Christian Stokke and Guro Hansen Helskog, "Promoting Dialogical Democracy: Dialogos Philosophical Dialogues in Intercultural and Interfaith Education," *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 24, no. 2 (2014): 182-201.

12 Christian Stokke and Guro Hansen Helskog, "Promoting Dialogical Democracy," 182-201

eventually help people to better understand their place in their society and thus contribute to the sustainment of a dialogical form of democracy.

What Stokke and Helskog had argued above is in line with what had been written by Mouffe many years ago. Mouffe strongly believes that the best way to instill a sense of citizenship in a nation which has diverse ideologies and identities within is not to focus only on the notion of duty and individual freedom[13]. Achieving a full sense of citizenship is also to acknowledge differing voices and build a collective identity based on these differences through the process of radical democratization. In Mouffe's words, the aim of citizenship is not to only find the *bonum commune* (common good) which might end in some form of totalitarianism. In this aspect, citizenship would be seen as 'an articulation of principles' that would have people guide themselves in achieving their freedom and maintaining equality based on the identity to which they are subscribing. Thus, this notion of 'radical democratic citizenship' could only be kept through dialogical democracy. Dialogical democracy might assist the government as well as the citizens to instill public-spiritedness, respect for rights and pluralism, and also acknowledge the ethical-political concern especially when dealing with minority groups. It is expected that radical citizenship will eventually restore the betterment of democracy and ensure that diversity is well-accepted and included in the political system.

While there are many positive sides of interfaith dialogues to contribute towards the construction of a dialogical, inclusive form of democracy, it should be noted that there are also several challenges towards building the process of dialogical interfaith initiatives. The challenges might differ from one region to another, as there are some differences in cultural, religious, and political views that might deter the progress of interfaith dialogues. Orton mentioned that there are at least

13 Chantal Mouffe, "Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community," in *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*, 1 (1992).

seven key points that need to be addressed whenever an interfaith dialogue is about to take place[14]. These points are as follows: (1) participants who would like to be involved in the discussion; (2) groups/participants who are not being involved for several reasons; (3) the aim and intention of the dialogue; (4) profile of participants' diverse ideologies and thoughts; (5) guarantee of safe, diverse space for all participants; (6) management of diversity and representation in the interfaith dialogue; and (7) the possible dilemmas that might arise from the conducts of participants and the dynamics of interfaith dialogue.

In his elaboration, Azumah added some more considerations which could be stumbling blocks for the continuing efforts in constructing dialogues between religious communities[15]. The initial issue that often inhibits progress in dialogue is theological sensitivity, esp83ecially in religions which have similar but different teachings like Christianity and Islam. Second, perception about the mission and dialogue; and how these two would correlate with the issue of religious propagation and theology of salvation. In some aspects, the dialogue could be seen as a part of the mission, since it involves and includes the propagation of religious teachings. It is important to note that a dialogue doesn't have to be a missionary activity in nature as well. Azumah also argued that the result of an interfaith dialogue is a changing perception of other religions from negative to positive.

[14] Andrew Orton, "Interfaith Dialogue: Seven Key Questions for Theory, Policy and Practice," *Religion, State & Society* 44, no. 4 (2016): 349-365.

[15] John Azumah, "The Integrity of Interfaith Dialogue," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 13, no. 3 (2002): 269-280.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Citizenship and Politics of Interreligious Engagement in Indonesia

How has the notion of politics of religious diversity management and interreligious engagement evolved in Indonesia throughout time? To what extent does the government take control over the politics of religious diversity management in Indonesia? How do Indonesian religious societies and organizations eventually realize their significant role in ensuring interreligious engagement throughout the country? Normatively, religious life is highly appreciated by the Pancasila and the Constitution of Indonesia as part of Indonesia's inseparable identity and way of life. Thus, since the beginning of its independence, Indonesia hasn't considered itself a secular state due to the direct mention of God in its first principle of Pancasila.

As a way to make practical arrangements to manage the diversity of religious communities in Indonesia, the Indonesian government created the Ministry of Religious Affairs to accommodate the interests and needs of religious communities. The establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs was initially not welcomed by both the Catholic and Protestant communities in Indonesia. Initially, tensions were still high between Muslims and Christian politicians who debated strongly over 'the seven clauses (*tujuh kata*)' that places Islamic law (*Shari'a Islam*) as one of the main legal sources in the Indonesian system. The establishment of this Ministry evoked such emotion, that one of the senior Christian politicians of that time Latuharhary proposed that religious issues should be handed over to the Ministry of Education instead[16]. During that period, JWM Bakker SJ also commented that rather than serving all religions in

[16] Adrianus Sunarko, "Religion in a Democratic and Pluralistic Society (The Experience of Indonesia)," *International Journal of Public Theology* 12, no. 3-4 (2018): 440-454.

Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs tends to serve the interest of Muslims and is thus used as a tool of propaganda[17]. Facing these challenges, the then-Minister of Religious Affairs of Indonesia from Nahdlatul Ulama (an Islamic political party at that time), Wahid Hasyim felt the need to declare official religions and to create specific directorates/bureaus specifically catering to the needs of the official religions of the Indonesian populace[18]. Through his initiatives of reorienting and reorganizing the Ministry, Wahid Hasyim envisioned that the Ministry would be a vehicle that would facilitate the creation of a harmonious interreligious society in Indonesia and ensure Indonesia's credential as a multireligious society would be guaranteed in the future.

Eventually, as the Indonesian government continued to consolidate its government over time after the acknowledgement of Indonesian sovereignty in 1949, many religious needs of the non-Muslim communities were addressed. Many educational institutions and religious organizations were established in Indonesia and these institutions were active in doing their missions throughout the country. As the debate over constitutional changes and national ideologies was over in the early 1960s, more Christian political groups were also solidifying their support for the Old Order of Soekarno. Soekarno's strong defense of Pancasila as a unifying ideology of the diverse nation made him a trustable figure amongst Christians and Catholics. During this time, Soekarno also came to several nationwide meetings of Christians, such as the centennial jubilee of the Batak Protestant Christian Church (*Huria Kristen Batak Protestan*) in Tarutung[19]. For his service toward the growth and safety of the Catholics in Indonesia, Soekarno was also awarded by Pope Pius XII

17 B. J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (De Nederlandsche Boek- en Steendr., 1982), 107.

18 Rijal Mumazziq Z and Ahmad Khubby Ali Rohmad, "Becoming an Indonesian Muslim: The Idea of Religious Nationalism KH Ahmad Wahid Hasyim 1945-1953," *DINIKA: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2021): 309-334.

19 K. A. Steenbrink and J. S. Aritonang, "Chapter Seventeen. The Ecumenical Movement in Indonesia with Special Attention to the National Council of Churches," in *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, 823-865 (Brill, 2008).

and that was also the first instance of a Catholic pope giving the highest award to the leader of a Muslim nation[20]. But, amidst these developments, most of the interreligious engagements were facilitated by the government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Maintaining religious autonomy was becoming the main concern at that time, due to the still-sensitive issue of imposition of Islamic law towards Indonesian citizens and the possibility of Indonesia becoming a full-fledged Islamic country. Thus, the government was trying hard to ensure the trust of the non-Muslim communities by providing them with a sense of autonomy and security against state intervention and threats.

It was not until the New Order that the situation changed a bit in the course of the 1960s. As Soeharto stepped in as Indonesia's new president, he took significant steps to erase identity-based and ideological politics in the past in favor of 'Pancasilaist' politics which emphasize the notion of national unity and national development[21]. Soeharto's main concern at that time was to stabilize Indonesia rather than leave Indonesia in endless limbo due to surmounting debts and political crises. Thus, religious and ideological parties from all factions and religious backgrounds were forced to fuse into three main parties, that is the United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* - a fusion of Islamic-oriented parties), Indonesian Democratic Party (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* - a fusion of Christian-oriented and nationalist parties), and Functional Group (*Golongan Karya - a fusion of state employee unions)*[22]. This fusion made it easier for Soeharto to manage potential conflict between differing social and political factions in Indonesia. During this time, new thoughts and religious teachings were

20 A. Kunarwoko, "Pijar Vatikan II: Tiga Kali Presiden Soekarno Menemui Paus di Vatikan," *Sesawi.net*, April 6, 2014, https://www.sesawi.net/pijar-vatikan-ii-tiga-kali-presiden-soekarno-menemui-paus-di-vatikan-25b/.

21 Michael Morfit, "Pancasila: The Indonesian State Ideology According to the New Order Government," *Asian Survey* 21, no. 8 (1981): 838-851.

22 Andreas Ufen, "From Aliran to Dealignment: Political Parties in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 16, no. 1 (2008): 5-41.

starting to take root in modern Indonesian society. One of the thoughts that were starting to blossom in Indonesia was the idea of interfaith dialogue, especially between Muslims and Christians.

The spread of interfaith dialogue in Indonesia was made possible by the enactment of *Nostra Aetate* as one of the documents produced during the Second Vatican Council. Initiated by both the Holy See and regional and local Catholic missions, many interreligious dialogue initiatives were spearheaded by Catholic bishops in Indonesia and the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Indonesia[23]. Mukti Ali, then-the Minister of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, initiated a series of discussions between a newly-formed group of modernist Muslim scholars and Catholic priests in Jakarta to design a new pathway that would help ordinary Indonesians to manage and evaluate their existing initiatives in interfaith dialogue[24]. In global fora, Mukti Ali also attended different forums to promote Indonesian perspectives in interfaith dialogue, such as at one congress convened by the World Council of Churches in Ajaltoun, Lebanon[25]. After Mukti Ali, several other initiatives were launched mostly by the Indonesian government, noting the pre-existing sensitivity and prejudice about interfaith dialogue. Another development that needs to be mentioned is the creation of a trilogy of harmony (*trilogi kerukunan*) which would eventually become the pillar of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. This trilogy of harmony will consist of at least three important elements: intrareligious harmony, interreligious harmony and the harmony between government and religious communities[26] .

23 Adison Adrianus Sihombing, Irwan Abdullah, and Zaenuddin Hudi Prasojo, "Nostra Aetate and Space for Religious Moderation: Interfaith Dialogue in Multicultural Indonesia," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 19, no. 55 (2020): 154.

24 Munawir Aziz, "Meneropong Masa Depan Dialog Antar Agama," *NUOnline*, January 30, 2012, https://nu.or.id/pustaka/meneropong-masa-depan-dialog-antar-agama-GLGGu.

25 Achmad Munjid, "Building a Shared Home: Investigating the Intellectual Legacy of the Key Thinkers of Inter-Religious Dialogue in Indonesia" (PhD diss., Temple University Libraries, 2014), 44.

26 Yonatan Alex Arifianto and Joseph Christ Santo, "Tinjauan Trilogi Kerukunan Umat Beragama Berdasarkan Perspektif Iman Kristen," *Angelion: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 1, no. 1 (2020): 1-14.

It was not until the early 1990s that interfaith dialogue became more popular and gained more traction in Indonesian society. Universities and non-governmental organizations started to initiate dialogues between different religious communities due to political reopening and democratization in Indonesia. Several new civil society organizations were specifically created for serving interfaith initiatives, such as Dian (*Dialog Antar Iman*) which was created by a group of Muslim scholars and Protestant theologians to open more possibilities for interfaith initiatives from grassroots levels and rethink pluralism as a basis of a future for Indonesian society[27]. Some pro-democracy activists, such as Abdurrahman Wahid, are also known for his groundbreaking ideas on ensuring pluralism, harmony and democracy in Indonesia[28]. After being hit by a series of interreligious and interethnic crises in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Indonesian government felt the urgency to establish its platform to maintain tolerance and harmony at the community level.

Thus, *Forum Komunikasi Umat Beragama* (FKUB - Interreligious Communication Forum) was created in 2001 as a state-sanctioned forum to mitigate potential conflict and build better cooperation between religious communities. FKUB was also given powers to the Ministry of Religious Affairs as well as local governments to issue recommendation letters for the establishment of new religious organizations and new religious worship sites[29]. Until today, despite controversial interreligious issues such as the (allegedly) blasphemy act of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama in 2016, many interreligious activities are continuing without any serious challenge from the government and civil society. Interreligious engagements are considered a platform that can assist minority religious groups to find themselves within Indonesian society and for the majority

27 Interfidei/Institut DIAN, "SEJARAH," *Interfidei/Institut DIAN*, n.d., https://www.interfidei.or.id/profil.

28 Achmad Munjid, "Abdurrahman Wahid's Contribution to Inter-Religious Dialogue in Indonesia," *Social Justice: A Sketch of The West and The Islamic World Experiences* 93 (2021): page numbers.

29 Husni Mubarok, "Memperkuat Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB)," *Dialog* 37, no. 2 (2014): 195-206.

groups to also understand and embrace the differences[30]. The rise of interfaith initiatives has nurtured the notion of inclusive citizenship in Indonesia, as compared to a previously 'Pancasilaist' and majoritarian notion of citizenship already implemented in the New Order.

Citizenship and Politics of Interreligious Engagement in Türkiye

The principle of citizenship is rather differently applied in the Turkish context. As a country which has a previously rich history of managing diversity under the imperial system of the Ottoman Empire, the process of modernization and secularization of Türkiye as a nation-state unit within a Westphalian system reversed the existing multiculturalist Türkiye of *millet* (ethnoreligious unit) completely. In the process of constructing a new vision of citizenship, Türkiye emphasized highly the ethnocentric notion of Turkishness. In this ethnocentric notion of Turkishness, Turkish citizenship could only be entirely claimed rightfully by someone who had a Turkic race, spoke the Turkish language, and exclusively followed Turkish customs and religion (that is the religion of Islam). Normatively, according to the Turkish constitution, everyone who paid allegiance and loyalty to the Turkish Republic could be considered a Turkish citizen, regardless of their religious, ideological, or ethnocultural background. Practically, the case differentiates Turkish citizens between those who are fully Turkic in racial terms and Muslim in religious terms with those who are non-Turkic and non-Muslim. This practice of differentiation made it difficult for people coming from *millet* (ethno-religious groups outside of Muslims in Türkiye) to participate actively in

30 Peter Richardson et al., "Blasphemy and Persecution: Positioning in an Inter-Religious Discussion," *Text & Talk* 40, no. 1 (2020): 75-98.

policymaking processes and be involved in governmental agencies as public officers[31].

This ethno-religious centrality of Turkishness became clearer when the secular regime of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk declared the establishment of *Diyanet İşler Reisliği* (Presidency of Religious Affairs) as a governmental body which is responsible for controlling religious discourses under the laicism paradigm of the Kemalist regime and ensures the 'modernist and scientific' understanding of religious teaching, especially that of Islamic religion[32]. Unlike Indonesia, the Presidency of Religious Affairs is specifically organized for the interests of Muslims in Türkiye. According to the Treaty of Laussane, the other religions were provided with (minimum degree of) autonomy and legal protection according to the existing Constitution and the legal frameworks that would be settled afterwards[33].

This helped religious communities in Türkiye to maintain its organizational framework already kept and retained for centuries, but also made it impossible for religious communities to engage together in an open and honest environment. The overarching majoritarian notion of Turkishness hindered many efforts for possible institutional-driven and/or grassroots-driven interreligious dialogue in Türkiye. Even after the declaration of Nostra Aetate in the 1960s, the notion of interreligious dialogue was still seen as taboo for many in Türkiye. One of the examples of interreligious dialogue happening during that time was a meeting between the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Catholic Pope which happened in the year 1964 in Jerusalem, and subsequently, this ended

31 Başak İnce, *Citizenship and Identity in Turkey: From Atatürk's Republic to the Present Day* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012); Mesut Yeğen, "Turkish Nationhood: Civic and Ancestral and Cultural," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 23, no. 3 (2017): 318-339; Abdulkerim Sen, "Three Evils of Citizenship Education in Turkey: Ethno-Religious Nationalism, Statism and Neoliberalism," *Critical Studies in Education* 63, no. 3 (2022): 307-322.

32 Ayşe Yanardağ, "Atatürk Devrimleri ve Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (1924-1938)" (2018)

33 Yeşim Bayar, "In Pursuit of Homogeneity: The Lausanne Conference, Minorities, and the Turkish Nation," *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 1 (2014): 1012.

with a public Catholic-Orthodox Joint Declaration of 1965, which was simultaneously read in Rome during Second Vatican Council and a special ceremony in Istanbul (Constantinople)[34] .

It was not until the early 1980s that ideas regarding interfaith dialogue began to be openly discussed by several Muslim scholars in Türkiye. In 1984, a Catholic-led initiative was started in Türkiye to mediate the meetings between academicians from the oldest Muslim theological faculties at Ankara University and Istanbul University, Turkish Muslim scholars, and Catholic leadership in Türkiye. This meeting was also facilitated by Kasim Gülek, one of the senior politicians from the Republic People Party (CHP - *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)*. This initial meeting successfully connected the Pontifical Gregorian University with the two universities mentioned above to engage and conduct classes and research collaboration on theological studies. Before this period, an initial discussion took place during one of the Muslim-Christian dialogue forums held in Libya which was also participated by some Turkish Muslim theologians from Ankara University and Marmara University in February 1976. In the 1990s, many private actors and religious leaders took bolder positions on interfaith dialogue.

One of the actors who played a crucial role in this aspect is M. Fethullah Gülen, a leader of a currently banned Muslim congregation known as *Fettulahçı* (followers of Fetullah), officially named by the Turkish government as *Fetullah Terör Örgütü/FETÖ* (Fetullah Terror Organization) who is still active in the United States of America and several countries across the World. Recognizing the lack of initiatives from both the government and civil society organizations, Gülen wanted to be the pioneer in this field by initiating a series of meetings with leaders of the Eastern Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church. In 1998,

[34] Thomas Fitzgerald, "Historic Meeting of Pope Paul VI, Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras," *GOARCH*, January 25, 2014, https://www.goarch.org/ar/-/historic-meeting-of-pope-paul-vi-ecumenical-patriarch-athenagoras.

history marked the first meeting between a Turkish Muslim religious leader (Fethullah Gülen) and Pope John Paul II. While there were several positive assessments about the meeting conducted by both parties, many from secular and Islamist religious factions were critical of such a meeting between Turkish Muslims and the Catholic Pope. While the Turkish secular factions are skeptical in asking about the true intention behind the meeting by marking it as serving Western interests, religious factions are labelling such a meeting as a betrayal towards Turkish Muslim identity (Sharon-Krespin 2009)[35].

Nevertheless, this initiative kickstarted by this figure eventually inspired the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) to open a special unit/bureau within *Diyanet* to work on the topic of interfaith dialogue specifically. This division was put under the Deputy President of Religious Affairs who was named as Secretariat for Interreligious and Intercultural Relations. This Secretariat Office was responsible for maintaining works and projects conducted by *Diyanet* and its partners on issues related to academic research, archival and historical works, relationships with Christian communities in the European Union and the World, relationships with Jewish communities, and relationships with religious communities in the Far East (which includes Buddhism and Hinduism). This Secretary would then evolve to become the (now-abolished) Directorate of Interreligious Dialogue (*Dinlerarası Diyalog Şube Müdürlüğü*) (Olgun 2009, 274-276)[36].

In the year 2000, *Diyanet* conducted the Eurasian Islamic High Council (*Avrasya İslam Şurası*) in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. This forum was intended to discuss the development of Islamic narratives in the post-communist Eastern Europe and Balkan regions, and how Muslim

35 Rachel Sharon-Krespin, "Fethullah Gülen's Grand Ambition: Turkey's Islamist Danger," *Middle East Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (Winter 2009): 55-66.

36 Hakan Olgun, "Diyanet'in Dinlerarası Diyalog Algısı," *Milel ve Nihal* 6, no. 2 (2009): 274-276.

societies in this region could position themselves amidst the social and political change. One of the issues discussed in this High Council is the interfaith dialogue and engagement in the region. *Diyanet* invited several speakers representing Catholic, Christian and Jewish religious communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina to talk about the future course for peacebuilding in the country. In the year 2002, in another edition of the Eurasian Islamic High Council, *Diyanet* also made an emphasis on the importance of interreligious dialogue, by mentioning the urgency to differentiate between terrorism and the true message of religions[37].

Interestingly, in this High Council, *Diyanet* also discussed whether interreligious dialogue has been used as a way of doing 'missionary work' in the Muslim communities of the regions of Eastern Europe, Balkan, and Turkic Republics of Central Asia. As a way to anticipate this, *Diyanet* argued that there should be an effort 'to balance' the missionary efforts by the Christian organization by ensuring that Muslims in the regions also had equal access to Islamic teaching and learning[38]. Aside from this regional initiative, Türkiye reexplored its diversity, by declaring the Bosphorus Declaration (*Boğaziçi Deklarasyonu*) together with the religious leaders of Abrahamic religions in Türkiye, which consisted of representations of Catholic, Christian and Jewish religious leaders. While the contents of the Declaration are mostly symbolic, this Declaration should be noted as an early effort of interfaith dialogue in Türkiye after years of absence in the early 21st century[39].

In the year 2005, the Turkish government was also doing certain endeavors in global politics that would tackle the possible conflict and bigger disagreements between Muslims and Christians. At that time, as the Global War on Terrorism ensued, Türkiye together with Spain and the

37 Avrasya İslam Şurası, "Tarihçe," *Diyanet*, n.d., https://avrasyaislamsurasi.diyanet.gov.tr/tr-TR/Content/Detail/2/.

38 Ibid.

39 Sevda Alkan, "Dini Liderlerin Barış Çıkarması," *Yeni Şafak*, November 8, 2005, https://www.yenisafak.com/arsiv/2005/ekim/08/g12.html.

United Nations joined forces to create a new initiative called as Alliance of Civilizations (*Medeniyetlerarasi Ittifaki*). United Nations Alliance of Civilizations was thus created and conducted programs that focus on nurturing better understanding and creating new platforms for people in the Muslim and Western world to collaborate. Balcı and Miş argued that this effort is actually in line with the Turkish aspiration to join the European Union's membership and also the Turkish effort to make itself a bridging country between two different civilizations (Western and Eastern) and two different religions (Islam and Christianity)[40]. Until today, the activity of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations is continuing, but with less Turkish involvement. Nonetheless, many Turkish initiatives in the interfaith dialogue platforms were decreasing. Aside from the domestic pressures from Islamist, secular and ultra-nationalist parties, the Turkish government also consider several sensitive issues in global politics, such as the Jyllands-Posten caricature crisis and the Regensburg lecture delivered by Pope Benedict XVI[41]. These unfortunate events resulted in serious repercussions for the Turkish public and thus forced the government to reconsider interfaith activities conducted in the future years.

Analysis: Recent Efforts and Challenges in Interreligious Engagement in Indonesia After DHF

One of the countries which is widely welcoming and implementing the Declaration of Human Fraternity (DHF) is Indonesia. As one of the countries with a strong and significant minority Catholic population, Indonesia felt the urge to push forward with the agenda to

40 Ali Balcı and Nebi Miş, "Turkey's Role in the Alliance of Civilizations: A New Perspective in Turkish Foreign Policy?" *Turkish Studies* 9, no. 3 (2008): 387-406.

41 Christopher Markiewicz, "Europeanist Trends and Islamicate Trajectories in Early Modern Ottoman History," *Past and Present* 239, no. 1 (2018): 265-281; Jeremy Salt, "Global Disorder and the Limits of 'Dialogue'," *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2008): 691-710.

promote at the community level and policy level the values that have been agreed upon by Al-Azhar and the Holy See. After the enactment of the DHF, Ignatius Suharyo was appointed as the new cardinal from Indonesia by Pope Francis. As Cardinal Suharyo began his duty, DHF was quickly made one of the priority agendas for the Annual Summit of Indonesian Catholic Bishop Conference (*Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia*) at the end of 2019[42]. In this conference, the Catholic bishops were asked to support and drive interreligious engagements in their diocese to ensure that the idea of DHF is grounded in Indonesian society[43]. Soon after the declaration by the Indonesian Catholic Bishop Conference, many dioceses, parishes, and Muslim organizations welcomed the initiatives promoted within DHF to be implemented within their communities. As early as October 2019, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, the two largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia were also invited to the Vatican to discuss interreligious collaborations on the issue of bioethics[44] (Antara, 2019).

Before explaining further about the efforts conducted by these communities, it would be also interesting to point out that not too long after the signing of DHF in early 2019, Nahdlatul Ulama also conducted a Grand Conference (*Musyawarah Besar/Konferensi Besar Nahdlatul Ulama*) that discussed some important issues regarding religiosity and Indonesian nationalism. In this grand conference which convenes thousands of senior Muslim scholars from all around Indonesia, it was decided by a majority of the Indonesian Muslim scholars that believers outside of Islam would not be called *kafir* (infidel) any more. Instead, in the context of the modern nation-state system and Indonesian social-

42 DOKPEN KWI, "Pesan Sidang KWI Tahun 2019: Persaudaraan Insani untuk Indonesia Damai," *DOKPEN KWI*, November 12, 2019, https://www.dokpenkwi.org/pesan-sidang-kwi-tahun-2019/.

43 Keuskupan Bandung, "Sidang KWI 2019: Mengakarrumputkan Dokumen Abu Dhabi," *Keuskupan Bandung*, November 12, 2019, https://keuskupanbandung.org/2019/11/12/sidang-kwi-2019-mengakarrumputkan-dokumen-abu-dhabi/.

44 Antara, "Wakil NU dan Muhammadiyah Bertemu Paus," *Antara*, October 31, 2019, https://www.antaranews.com/berita/1140079/wakil-nu-dan-muhammadiyah-bertemu-paus.

political system, it was considered to be unethical and unjust to call non-Muslim Indonesian citizens as such. This declaration was made in line with the classical understanding of *fiqh* (Islamic law) that calls for respect for (equal) rights and security for non-Muslim citizens who had already lived in harmony with Muslim citizens. Thus, Nahdlatul Ulama decided that Indonesian Muslim citizens must consider their non-Muslim citizens as equal in terms of rights and responsibility[45].

This decision was made in line with the Declaration of Human Fraternity. The then-chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama, Said Aqil Siradj, called for Nahdlatul Ulama members to support the declaration because the contents of DHF were similar to what Nahdlatul Ulama had agreed upon in the 1984 Declaration, which formulated three conceptions of fraternity in the Indonesian context, that is *ukhuwwah basyariyah* (universal human fraternity), *ukhuwwah wathaniyyah* (national/compatriot fraternity), and *ukhuwwah Islamiyyah* (Islamic fraternity). Within this conception of fraternity, Nahdlatul Ulama asked its members to always build solidarity within and without, both in Indonesian and global contexts[46].

The implementation of DHF was becoming more intensive in the year 2020. In the early months of 2020, some archdioceses and parishes in Indonesia initiated interfaith discussions to promote the idea of DHF. Archbishop of Merauke, who is also one of the most senior bishops in Indonesia, invited religious leaders to convene and talk about ways to manage diversity in the easternmost city of Indonesia[47]. Some parishes in

45 Muhammad Faeshol Muzammil, "Tahqiqul Manath Keputusan Bahtsul Masail Munas NU 2019 tentang Status Non Muslim di Indonesia - Bagian 1," *Nahdlatul Ulama*, September 19, 2022, https://islam.nu.or.id/bahtsul-masail/tahqiqul-manath-keputusan-bahtsul-masail-munas-nu-2019-tentang-status-non-muslim-di-indonesia-bagian-1-GdmLS.

46 Fabian J. Kuwado, "NU Dukung 'Human Fraternity Document' yang Ditandatangani Vatikan dan Al-Azhar," *KOMPAS*, February 27, 2019, https://pemilu.kompas.com/read/2019/02/27/17532931/nu-dukung-human-fraternity-document-yang-ditandatangani-vatikan-dan-al-azhar.

47 PenaKatolik, "Tindaklanjuti Deklarasi Abu Dhabi, Mgr Mandagi Gelar Coffee Morning Bersama Para Tokoh Agama," *PenaKatolik*, March 16, 2020, https://penakatolik.com/2020/03/16/tindaklanjuti-deklarasi-abu-dhabi-mgr-mandagi-gelar-coffee-morning-bersama-para-tokoh-agama/.

Java, such as Duren Sawit Parish, began a discussion in early 2020 which involved several figures, such as experts from CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies) and representatives from NU[48]. Some of the governmental units, such as the General Directorate of Catholic Affairs and its subordinate local offices throughout Indonesia, also dedicated some days to socialising and discussing the content and general outlook of the DHF[49]. As COVID-19 began to spread all over Indonesia around February-March 2023, most of the initiatives taken by many organizations were conducted online but without losing any spirit of conducting an honest dialogue between religious communities. One of the most important initiatives taken especially after the declaration of another encyclical coherent to DHF's core message, Fratelli Tutti, is the international seminar on Fratelli Tutti conducted by the State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga, together with various partners from Kenya and North America[50].

After COVID-19, more practical approaches were taken by both the government of Indonesia and civil society organizations in Indonesia. As Indonesia starts its G-20 Presidency in 2022, there is an opportunity carefully curated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, Muslim World League and Nahdlatul Ulama joined hands together to initiate a new side event to the G-20 conference that would be called as Religious-20 or R-20. This initiative, as mentioned by Nahdlatul Ulama, would be a way to find workable solutions and applicable mechanisms to make religion not a source of conflict and clashes, but a source of transformation, progress, and peace. Together with Muslim World League (*Rabithah Alam al-*

48 Paroki Duren Sawit, "Diskusi Dokumen Abu Dhabi," *Paroki Duren Sawit*, February 17, 2020, https://parokidurensawit.org/2020/02/17/diskusi-dokumen-abu-dhabi/.

49 Kanwil Kemenag Prov. Sulut, "ASN Bimas Katolik Hadiri Sosialisasi Dokumen Abu Dhabi," *Kanwil Kemenag Prov. Sulut*, March 7, 2020, https://sulut.kemenag.go.id/berita/504360/ASN-Bimas-Katolik-Hadiri-Sosialisasi-Dokumen-Abu-Dhabi-.

50 UIN Sunan Kalijaga, "Konferensi Global UIN Suka Membawa Pesan Perdamaian untuk Indonesia dan Dunia", *UIN Sunan Kalijaga,* accessed July 21, 2024, https://uin-suka.ac.id/id/berita/detail/754/blog-post.html.

Islami), one of the leading Islamic organizations of the globe, Nahdlatul Ulama ventured to design a conception that makes R-20 an entirely different forum that is effective for religious leaders and religious organizations to talk together about global problems[51] .

This forum was designed to be a different one than the Interfaith-20 (IF-20), which focuses more on the experts' views and insights on how interfaith communities could contribute to the policymaking process. Different from IF-20, R-20 would be entirely based on the involvement of religious leaders and religious organizations, not on professionals and experts[52]. Alongside this initiative, Nahdlatul Ulama also proposed another idea to be worked on nationwide level known as Fikih Peradaban (*Civilizational Fiqh*), which goes along the same lines and principles as *Fratelli tutti*, emphasizing universal humanity and strengthening inclusive nationalism. Recently, national figures comprising Muslim, Catholic, [Protestant] Christian, Hindu, Buddha, and Confucian religious leaders signed the 'Atmajaya Declaration' which reiterates the importance of national harmony according to values of universal brotherhood and Pancasila and stresses the urgency of implementing a more open dialogue between diverse religious communities in Indonesia, especially among young people.

Indonesia has shown that interfaith engagement efforts are being conducted in two different levels, both in state and society levels. In state level, through the existence of bodies such as Ministry of Religious Affairs and FKUB (Interreligious Communication Forum) helped solidify the engagement between various religious communities. These two state

51 R.A. Majid, "NU Gagas Acara R20, Gus Yahya Ungkap Alasannya: Dunia Pernah Jadi Rimba Pertarungan Antar-Agama," *Kompastv*, November 3, 2022, https://www.kompas.tv/nasional/344394/nu-gagas-acara-r20-gus-yahya-ungkap-alasannya-dunia-pernah-jadi-rimba-pertarungan-antar-agama; Ahmad Ubaedillah, "R-20, NU, dan Misi Kemanusiaan Agama-Agama," *Media Indonesia*, November 12, 2022, https://mediaindonesia.com/opini/536817/r-20-nu-dan-misi-kemanusiaan-agama-agama.

52 James Dorsey, "Indonesia's G20 Chairmanship: Balancing on a Diplomatic Tightrope," *Modern Diplomacy*, September 14, 2022, https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/09/14/indonesias-g-20-chairmanship-balancing-on-a-diplomatic-tightrope/.

institutions were formed during the time when Indonesia was still consolidating its political system and democratic mechanism. Even if these institutions assisted the 'top-down', authoritarian mode of societal harmonization back then during the New Order, this mechanism of communal tolerance provided a space for religious communities to interact and discuss important matters related to societal cohesion in Indonesia. This was in line with what Orton had argued about the importance of ensuring a 'space of engagement' for interreligious community to exist in democratizing society. Fortunately, this 'top-down' authoritarian model of maintaining tolerance and interreligious cohesion was being complemented by more democratic type of interreligious engagements, which is focusing more on conducting bottom-up, organic networking between newly-established interreligious platforms and religious societies. In certain moments, these enabled networks of interreligious communities to advocate for democracy and human rights issues. Such case occurred in the SRILI (Srikandi Lintas Iman/*Interfaith Women Warriors*) and SP Kinasih networks in Jogjakarta, both of which are feminist interreligious networks which are speaking for the rights of marginalized Papuan communities and forceful land-grabbing cases in Wadas, Purworejo, Central Java. The democratic consolidation between differing religious communities intensified engagement, thus hindered the possibilities between these communities to focus on sensitive theological debates.

Analysis: Recent Efforts and Challenges in Interreligious Engagement in Türkiye After DHF

In the context of Türkiye, many interreligious engagements are being scrutinized and controlled by Diyanet. After the 2010s, Diyanet significantly reduces interreligious engagements for several reasons. One of the major reasons behind this reduction is the conflict between the

Government of Türkiye under Recep Tayyip Erdogan's premiership and Fethullah Gülen, leader of a religious cult movement who called themselves *hizmet* (loosely translated as [community] service)[53]. Many Turkish Muslim scholars started to consider the idea of interreligious dialogue and engagement as blasphemous, or as a cover that serves Western interests. Especially with the introduction of the idea of 'moderate Islam' (*ılımlı İslam*), some Turkish scholars saw this effort as a way to weaken the true self of Turkish Muslim identity, which is identified with a strong pride in becoming Muslim and Turk at the same time[54]. By projecting this identity, Turkish Muslims would like to emphasize the centrality of religious and ethnic dominance in the process of Turkish nation-building and state-building, and this can't be compromised by the notion of 'moderating' through policies such as interreligious engagement.

Although the Turkish government has tried to be more active in initiatives such as the Alliance of Civilizations, such an effort could not be considered a 'genuine' endeavor to build bridges between the Western and the Eastern civilizations as Türkiye had claimed before. The primary motivation behind Turkish initial involvement in interreligious engagement, both at the national and global levels, is to convince the global community, especially the European Union, that Türkiye would be able to engage with its 'minority groups' and pave its way forward for democratization and inclusive citizenship[55]. Tensions between 'reformist' and 'conservative' also made it more challenging for Turkish authorities to continue their interreligious initiatives. Thus, a 'de facto' soft-secularism policy ensued and each religious community were able to maintain its

53 Hakkı Taş, "A History of Turkey's AKP-Gülen Conflict," *Mediterranean Politics* 23, no. 3 (2018): 395-402.

54 Ali Değermenci, "İslam'a Kurulan Tuzak: Dinlerarası Diyalog," *İstiklal*, May 3, 2022, https://www.istiklal.com.tr/kose-yazisi/islama-kurulan-tuzak-dinlerarasi-diyalog/688749; Mehmet O. Tulun, "Dinler-Arası Diyalog İçin Riyakâr Bir Çağrı," *AVIM*, September 17, 2015, https://avim.org.tr/tr/Yorum/DINLER-ARASI-DIYALOG-ICIN-RIYAKAR-BIR-CAGRI.

55 Ramazan Kılınç, "Turkey and the Alliance of Civilizations: Norm Adoption as a Survival Strategy," *Insight Turkey* 11, no. 3 (2009): 57–75, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26331099.

independence and activity, but without the need to be engaged in an open, faithful manner.

The enactment of DHF in 2019 did not bring much change in Türkiye. Particularly after the 2016 coup attempt against Recep Tayyip Erdogan which involved exponents of Fethullah Gulen members in the military, police and civil servants, Turkish people are becoming distant from the idea of conducting interreligious engagement, as such ideas were seen to originate from this person who is also behind the coup attempt and terrorist attack against a legitimate government[56]. However, this does not mean that the idea and activity of interreligious engagement is becoming obsolete in Turkish society. Some initiatives could be seen in several cases, either coming from civil society organizations or local municipalities as well. One local municipality in the Mediterranean region of Türkiye, Mersin, actively organizes meetings between religious communities in the region. This meeting is called '*Dinler Buluşması*' or Meeting Between Religions. The municipality had maintained this meeting for around 25 years to keep the spirit of diversity and multiculturalism alive in the historical city nearby to the town of Tarsus, a town that witnessed the birth of Saint Paul and the early growth of Christian communities in the 1st century A.D[57].

Other initiatives were also taken by a Jesuit priest, who is now an Auxiliary Bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of Anatolia, Bishop Antuan Ilgit. Antuan Ilgit pursued his advanced Master's and Doctorate degrees in bioethical issues. His last doctoral thesis written in 2017 proposed the possibility of opening another chapter of interreligious dialogue; that is

56 Tuncay Kardaş and Ali Balcı, "Understanding the July 2016 Military Coup: The Contemporary Security Dilemma in Turkey," *Digest of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 1 (2019): 144-163; For a Chicago-style footnote, you would format the reference like this: Ihsan Yılmaz and Ismail Albayrak, "Antagonism Towards Christians and Interfaith Dialogue," in *Populist and Pro-Violence State Religion: The Diyanet's Construction of Erdoğanist Islam in Turkey*, 167-188 (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2022).

57 Mersin Büyükşehir Belediyesi, "Mersin Büyükşehir Öncülüğünde '25. Dinler Buluşması' Etkinliği Yapıldı," Mersin Büyükşehir Belediyesi, July 1, 2023, https://www.mersin.bel.tr/haber/mersin-buyuksehir-onculugunde-25-dinler-bulusmasi-etkinligi-yapildi-1688192507.

through the academic discussions on bioethics between academics and religious persons alike on the issues surrounding abortion, in-vitro fertilization and the rights of disabled persons[58]. He remained committed to this idea when he was addressing the impact of the 2023 Turkish earthquake on the people of Hatay and Iskenderun, a community that he had served for years[59]. This means that an avenue of hope toward an open religious dialogue could still be expected to take place in Türkiye.

Finally, many attempts that are trying to resuscitate interreligious engagement amidst DHF are always dwindling due to continuous criticisms from Turkish society. Criticisms surrounding interreligious dialogues in contemporary Türkiye can be seen in several aspects. First, in terms of the political aspect, Türkiye sees that an effort to relive any interreligious engagement would mean dispossessing Türkiye and the Turkish people of its national identity and sovereignty[60]. Issues related to minority rights are still sensitive and regarded as non-comprisable issues by the Turkish people and government alike. The contents of the Lausanne Treaty that regulated minority rights since 1924 have clarified many things, but the implementation of the treaty since then is still problematic according to both the Greek and Turkish governments. The Turkish government often criticizes the Greek government for not being able to provide full rights to Muslim minorities in Western Thrace, and the same accusation was made as well by the Greek government to the Turkish parties by showing the discrimination towards Greek Orthodox minorities in Türkiye[61].

58 Antuan Ilgit, "Muslim and Catholic Perspectives on Disability in the Contemporary Context of Turkey: A Proposal for Muslim-Christian Dialogue" (PhD diss., Boston College, 2017).

59 Pallermo, "The Jesuit Ilgit, Auxiliary Bishop of Anatolia."

60 Independent Türkçe, "Bahçeli: Ilımlı İslam Safsatası, Dinler Arası Diyalog Masalı, İnanç Haklarımıza Kesif Bir Suikasttır," *Independent Türkçe*, March 10, 2021, https://www.indyturk.com/node/328151/siyaset/bah%C3%A7eli-il%C4%B1ml%C4%B1-i%CC%87slam-safsatas%C4%B1-dinler-aras%C4%B1-diyalog-masal%C4%B1-inan%C3%A7-haklar%C4%B1m%C4%B1za.

61 K. Tsitselikis, "The Convention of Lausanne (1923): Past and Current Appraisals," in *When Greeks and Turks Meet*, 211-226 (Routledge, 2016).

Restarting interreligious dialogue would mean that this sensitive issue would be brought up once again, and this would hurt nationalist sentiments that uphold highly the notion of Turkish nationalism and Turkish citizenship. Second, in terms of religious ethics, some Turkish Muslim scholars are noting that interreligious engagement would be akin to missionary and conversion activities, an argument frequently repeated by skeptical parties to the notion of interreligious dialogue. This was particularly addressed by Hayrettin Karaman, a conservative Islamist scholar who has significant followers in Turkish society. Karaman argues that the initiative kickstarted by Al-Azhar and the Holy See should not be taken lightly since this could be a 'trap' for Muslims who would be interested in learning more about other religions and being followers of such religions[62]. Interestingly, Karaman was not totally against the notion of 'interreligious dialogue', as long as such dialogue is based on firm faith and a clear understanding of religious scriptures, and thus such activities could only be conducted by highly knowledgeable religious scholars[63]. Additionally, the current Head of the Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, Ali Erbaş noted that terminologically interreligious dialogue is not a correct term. Religions can't have dialogue since each religion has its convictions, but religious believers and followers could help each other in kindness and repel forces of oppression and injustice throughout the world[64].

Turkish case displayed a rather different story than that of Indonesian case. While in Indonesia, state institutions and civil societies are significantly contributing to the creation of active interreligious engagement, the initiatives are rarely seen in Türkiye. With the exception

62 Hayrettin Karaman, "Zavallı Diyalog," *Facebook*, September 12, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/HayrettinKaraman.net/posts/2571790779534323/.

63 Hayrettin Karaman, "Zavallı Diyalog,"

64 Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, "Bugün Toplum Önderlerine Düşen En Büyük Sorumluluk, İnsanların Temel Haklarını Savunmaktır," *Diyanet.gov.tr*, October 10, 2018, https://www.diyanet.gov.tr/fr-FR/Institutionnel/d%C3%A9tail/12036/bugun-toplum-onderlerine-dusen-en-buyuk-sorumluluk-insanlarin-temel-haklarini-savunmaktir.

of early initiatives conducted by the Turkish government in early 2000s, it is difficult to find any public or grassroot commitment for interfaith engagement in Türkiye. Unfortunately, this lack of commitment for interfaith collaboration in Türkiye, both through government-run and civil society-run initiatives, has blocked the potential for inclusivity and democratization to run smoothly in Türkiye. As Orton has argued, existing avenues are crucial to ensure communication to occur between religious communities that would allow better understanding that grow organically. The reason behind the difficulties of even establishing official avenues and civil society initiatives was due to the fact there is a feeling of theological sentiments between religious communities, as Azumah had argued initially. This negative sentiment stems from historical contentions between Türkiye and (Western) Christian countries and also the strong ethnonationality sentiments in Türkiye which made it difficult for majority community to build bridge with minority communities. This consequently affected democratization to be build ad constructed from grassroot level.

CONCLUSION

The Document on Human Fraternity that was signed between Al Azhar and the Holy See arguably could be one of the most significant agreements between Muslims and Christians in the world's history. While the messages contained within the Document have universal value, the implementation of this Document might be subject to evaluation and restriction at the local and national level. This research shows that while Indonesia broadly welcomes the idea of strengthening interreligious engagement due to its vision of inclusive citizenship and its political goal of becoming a leading voice of tolerance and moderation in global politics, the same thing could not be said in the case of Türkiye which experienced

difficult political circumstances resulting from coup attempts and also social and political insecurities.

What is present in the status quo in Türkiye is a relatively precarious state of tolerance, with minority status and minority rights often becoming a sensitive talk within Turkish society. However, this difficult circumstance does not hinder certain religious clerics and local governance from initiating their version of interreligious engagement to rekindle hope and to make democratic and multicultural Turkish society possible once again. In the case of Indonesia, the government and civil society synchronized their efforts to ensure that interreligious dialogue will become a common spirit for all, thus it is easier for the community to kickstart new initiatives independently based upon the values of DHF. As with the case of Türkiye, Indonesia also took the route of engagement in multilateral fora, whether such fora would be effective to foster better engagements between religious communities will still be a subject of further investigation, as had already done in the case of Alliance of Civilizations. Differences in the understanding of citizenship ideals, historical trajectories, and contemporary political dynamics eventually influence how both countries of Indonesia and Türkiye shape their agenda based on the Document on Human Fraternity.

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