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ACADEMIA > **OPINION**

Blaspheming religion vs blaspheming humanity





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Against ‘blasphemy’ – Jakarta residents joining with mass organization Majelis Az-Zikra stage a rally during the first trial of non-active Jakarta Governor Basuki “Ahok” Tjahaja Purnama at the North Jakarta District Court on Dec.13. (Antara/M.Agung Rajasa)





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In the past few months, Indonesia, particularly Jakarta, has been on high alert for massive protests to persecute a person accused of blaspheming a religion. The reactions of people and organizations supporting the protests demonstrate their choice of protecting religion over respecting humanity.

This means that Islam is perceived by many Muslims as an expression of God's will and hence protesters believe God is intervening in the action.

The protests also show that there is a conflict between competing visions of religious morality and ethics and social realities because they do not protest against immoral and irreligious actions that in some way cause problems for humanity. This argument implies that many Muslims still believe that substantive justice and morality in Islam



remain ineluctable prisms through which Muslims can evaluate particular human rights.

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rights, especially the basic rights of vulnerable people. For example, they do not acknowledge that vulnerable people have rights related to their survival and existence, not just to establish communities but also to perform their basic rights.

The term blasphemy basically emanates from Abrahamic religions, especially Islam and Christianity. Yet, recent developments show that this term is mostly applied in the Muslim world.

In principle, neither the Quran nor the Prophet clearly regulated the existence of an offense of blasphemy or heresy, or a specific punishment for this. Blasphemy and heresy probably started to be regulated in post-prophetic Islamic jurisprudence to restrain and persecute freedom of expression, as well as to marginalize dissenting opinions within Islam.

Historically, a blasphemy law in Islam occurred as a consequence of jurisprudential differences, which then deeply influenced the broad practices of blasphemy laws in the Muslim world. Many well-known and highly respected Islamic scholars were accused of apostasy, unbelief or heresy because of the school they belonged to or



means that a number of political leaders and Islamic majority groups interpreted the Quran and the Sunnah to silence dissenting voices among Muslims.

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established the concept of adamiyyah (personhood or humanity) and the concept of ismah (inviolability), which means that every human being, whether Muslim or not, has the legal right to basic rights (al-ismah bi al-adamiyyah).

Islam, like many other religions, views every human being as a perfect creation of God, His representative on the earth, superior to creation as a whole, including angels, and blessed with intellect and free will to be tried by the Creator. From this perspective, a truly universalistic position on human rights in Islam is characterized by three features: accepting the inviolability of all human beings; doing so by virtue of their humanity; acknowledging that other universal cultures also respect the inviolability of all humanity.

The concept of al-ismah bi al-adamiyyah should apply to all non-Muslims and religious minorities that are numerically inferior and live among a Muslim ruling majority. This means that Muslims must stand even for the human rights of non-Muslims. Each individual, community and state is responsible for the entirety of humanity.

Muslims, especially those who belong to a majority, must know that demanding



When they are exercising their disproportionate position, they are also blaspheming against humanity. All human beings should be treated equally because they possess a dignified character of humanity, irrespective of social status, religion, treaty, or any

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population, basically determined by the majority, then the norms easily become legitimate.

In the Indonesian context, the blasphemy law is often misused by the majority to persecute dissident religious groups because the law provides and uses a definition favored by one version of religious belief backed by the state. Additionally, the law is also applied to criminalize any actions seen as threatening religious harmony and social stability.

This means that the term rights and duties in Indonesia is often monopolized by the majority, so this interpretation has peculiar status in Indonesia because it is often placed as a sacred canopy to control the implementation of statutes and strains the application of human rights in the country.

If we understand the first principle of Pancasila, belief in One Supreme God, there should be no priority in religion because the state equally recognizes all religions and there should be no religious labeling, such as mainstream religion, heretic or blasphemous, even though heterodoxy is a common feature of religion.



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