Revisiting the Issue of Religious Freedom in the Interpretation of the Qur'an: Between Opportunities and Threats

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Abstract: Religious freedom is a crucial issue in Qur'anic exegesis and social life, particularly in the context of interfaith relations and individual rights. Islam emphasizes this principle in QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 256 (lā ikrāha fī al-dīn), which states that faith must arise from consciousness, as well as in QS. Al-Kāfirūn (109): 6 (lakum dīnukum wa liya dīn), which affirms the existence of religious differences. This study aims to analyze the concept of religious freedom according to classical and contemporary exegetes, and to explore its limitations, opportunities, and challenges within social and legal contexts. A qualitative method is employed using a library research approach. The primary sources include classical and contemporary exegetical works such as Tafsīr al-Rāzī, Tafsīr al-Marāghī, and Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ, along with secondary references from academic journals and books. The analysis is conducted through content analysis, by identifying relevant verses, classifying exegetical views, and linking them to social realities. The findings show that Islam guarantees freedom in choosing one's religion, yet with the limitation that a Muslim must adhere to Islamic rules. In social and legal dimensions, this freedom is bounded by morality, security, and state regulations. Religious freedom has the potential to foster social harmony but also carries the risk of being misused for political interests, sparking interfaith conflict, and fueling extremism. Therefore, religious freedom must be balanced between individual rights and social responsibilities in order to create a harmonious and just society.

Keywords: Freedom of religion, QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 256, QS. Al-Kafirun (109): 6, Tolerance

Abstrak: *Kebebasan beragama merupakan isu krusial dalam kajian tafsir dan kehidupan sosial, terutama dalam konteks hubungan antaragama dan hak individu. Islam menegaskan prinsip ini dalam QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 256 (la ikraha fi al-din), yang menyatakan bahwa iman harus lahir dari kesadaran, serta QS. Al-Kafirun (109): 6 (lakum dinukum wa liya din), yang menegaskan eksistensi perbedaan keyakinan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konsep kebebasan beragama menurut para mufasir klasik*

dan kontemporer serta mengeksplorasi batasan, peluang, dan ancamannya dalam konteks sosial dan hukum. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kepustakaan (library research). Sumber data utama meliputi kitab-kitab tafsir klasik dan kontemporer seperti Tafsir Al-Razi, Tafsir Al-Maraghi, dan Tafsir Al-Misbah, serta referensi sekunder dari jurnal dan buku akademik. Analisis dilakukan melalui metode analisis isi, dengan mengidentifikasi ayat terkait, mengklasifikasikan pandangan mufasir, dan menghubungkannya dengan realitas sosial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Islam menjamin kebebasan dalam memilih agama, tetapi dengan batasan bahwa seorang Muslim harus tunduk pada aturan agamanya. Dalam tataran sosial dan hukum, kebebasan ini dibatasi oleh moralitas, keamanan, dan regulasi negara. Kebebasan beragama berpeluang menciptakan harmoni sosial, tetapi juga berisiko disalahgunakan untuk kepentingan politik, memicu konflik antaragama, dan ekstremisme. Oleh karena itu, kebebasan beragama harus diseimbangkan antara hak individu dan tanggung jawab sosial agar menciptakan kehidupan yang harmonis dan berkeadilan.

Kata kunci: *Kebebasan beragama, QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 256, QS. Al-Kafirun (109): 6, Toleransi.*

Introduction

Every human being has the right and freedom to choose religion according to his or her beliefs without any coercion from others.[1] Coercion in religion is prohibited, especially for those who already have faith, because every individual must be respected in practicing his religion. This right is affirmed in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights as part of fundamental freedoms that must be upheld.[2] Freedom of religion is also a gift from God that recognizes the right of man to determine his way of life.[3] Each individual is responsible for the consequences of his or her religious choices, so this freedom must be accompanied by full awareness.[4] Therefore, it is not justified to have coercion in religion, because belief must be born from personal awareness and choice. Humans have the freedom to distinguish and determine what is right and wrong in their lives.[5]

In Islam, one of the greatest gifts that Allah gives to man is the freedom to choose a religion based on his own beliefs, which distinguishes him from other

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[1] Alifia Widianti, Iman Pasu Marganda Hadiarto Purba, and Muhammad Turhan Yani, "Freedom of Religion : An Intersection Between Rights or Obligations ? Alifia Widianti , Iman Pasu Marganda Hadiarto Purba," *Journal of Civics and Moral Studies* 9, no. 1 (2024): 37–47, https://doi.org/10.26740/jcms.v9n1.p37-47.

[2] Antonio Cassese, *Hak Asasi Manusia Di Dunia Yang Berubah, Terj. A. Rahmad Zainuddin,* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2005). 296

[3] Departemen Agama RI, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik: Hubungan Antar-Umat Beragama* (Jakarta: Departemen Agama, 2008). J.1, 30.

[4] Kartika Nur Utami, "Kebebasan Beragama Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Pemikiran Islam* 16, no. 1 (2018), https://doi.org/10.59188/jurnalsostech.v2i3.309.

[5] Nurcholish Madjid, *Pintu-Pintu Menuju Tuhan* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2008). 220.

creatures. Humans are given the freedom to follow the instructions brought by the Prophet Muhammad, namely Islam as the most correct path, or to choose other beliefs, without any coercion.[6] This principle is affirmed in QS. al-Baqarah (2): 256 with the teaching *"la ikraha fi al-din"* which affirms that there is no coercion in religion. If coercion is justified, of course Allah Himself will determine it, but in fact this is not the case. Therefore, it is important to delve deeper into the concept of religious freedom in order to understand religious ethics in a pluralistic society.[7]

Research on religious freedom is basically no longer a new thing discussed in the academic realm. Research on this issue can be categorized into at least three main trends. *First*, the theological approach, as studied by Kartika Nur Utami in *"Religious Freedom in the Perspective of the Qur'an"*, highlights the concept *of la ikraha fi al-din* in QS. al-Baqarah (2):256, which affirms freedom of religious choice but with full consequences for Muslims.[8] *Second*, the policy and legal approaches, analyzed that show how religious harmony policies often clash with the principle of religious freedom in social practices and regulations of places of worship.[9] *Third*, the approach to moderation and cultural politics, criticizes how religious moderation in the 2020-2024 RPJMN still faces challenges in balancing social harmony and individual rights.[10] Thus, these three approaches reflect theological perspectives, state policies, and socio-political strategies in understanding religious freedom.

Although previous research has addressed religious freedom from legal, policy, and moderation perspectives, not much has examined how religious freedom is interpreted in classical and contemporary interpretive texts. Therefore, this research will focus on exploring the interpretation of religious

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[6] Departemen Agama RI, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik: Hubungan Antar-Umat Beragama*. J.1, 30.

[7] M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur`an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2012). J.1,

[8] Utami, "Kebebasan Beragama Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an"; Syafa'atun Almirzanah, "On Human Rights and the Qur'anic Perspective: Freedom of Religion and the Rule of Apostasy," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 45, no. 2 (2007): 367–88, https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2007.452.367-388.

[9] Delmus Puneri Salim, "Kerukunan Umat Beragama Vs Kebebasan Beragama Di Indonesia," *Potret Pemikiran* 21, no. 2 (2017), https://doi.org/10.30984/pp.v21i2.741; Safrodin Safrodin, "Religious Freedom in the Context of Islamic Da'wa," *Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah* 42, no. 1 (2022): 144–59, https://doi.org/10.21580/jid.v42.1.11860.

[10] Edi Junaedi, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Tinjauan Kritis Kebebasan Beragama," *Harmoni* 21, no. 2 (2022): 330–39, https://doi.org/10.32488/harmoni.v21i2.641; Suhadi Cholil, "First Essay Freedom of Religion amid Polarization and Religious Moderation Policy," *Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology* 6, no. 2 (2022): 196–204, https://doi.org/10.1558/isit.24603; M. Mukhibat et al., "Development and Evaluation of Religious Moderation Education Curriculum at Higher Education in Indonesia," *Cogent Education* 11, no. 1 (2024), https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2302308.

freedom and how the concept is applied in today's Muslim society. The main focus of this research is to explore the interpretation of the Qur'an on religious freedom in various books of interpretation and to examine its implications in Islamic discourse in Indonesia. Thus, this study not only discusses religious freedom as a normative principle, but also examines the dynamics of its interpretation in various social, political, and cultural contexts.

This study uses a qualitative method with a library *research approach* to analyze the concept of religious freedom in Islam based on classical and contemporary interpretations. Data is obtained from primary sources, namely books of tafsir such as *Tafsir al-Razi*, *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, and *Tafsir al-Misbah*, each of which represents its own space and time, as well as secondary sources in the form of relevant journals, books, and academic articles. The data collection technique was carried out through document study, while the data analysis used the content analysis method, with steps of identifying related verses, classification of interpretations, and contextual interpretation of the reality of religious freedom in Indonesia. With this approach, this research is expected to contribute to understanding religious freedom in Islam and its relevance in religious life in Indonesia.

Result and Discussion

The Dynamics of Defining Religious Freedom in Contemporary Discourse

Freedom of religion is a fundamental right that every individual has to choose, believe, and practice religious teachings in accordance with their beliefs without coercion or pressure from other parties. This right is recognized in various international documents, such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (DUHAM), which in Article 18 affirms that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, belief, and religion.[11] In this context, religious freedom includes the right to change religion or belief, as well as freedom to practice religious teachings, both individually and collectively.

In Islam, religious freedom is one of the important principles that affirms that humans are given free will in choosing beliefs.[12] This principle is based on verses of the Qur'an, such as QS. al-Baqarah (2): 256, which reads *"La ikraha fi al-din"*, which means "there is no coercion in religion." This verse is often interpreted as a form of recognition of human freedom in religion and affirms that faith must be born from awareness, not coercion. Therefore, in Islam, religious freedom is not only a right, but also part of the concept of free will given by Allah to man.

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[11] Majelis Umum PBB, "Dekiarasi Universal Hak-Hak Asasi Manusia," *Majelis Umum PBB* (Paris, 1948). 6-7.

[12] Muhammad Firdaus and Misnawati, "Konsep Kebebasan Beragama Dalam Islam: Analisis Pandangan Tāhir Ibn `Āsyūr," *Empirisma: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Kebudayaan Islam* 33, no. 1 (2024): 61–86, https://doi.org/10.30762/empirisma.v33i1.2021.

Religious freedom also has a social and political dimension, especially in interreligious relations in a pluralistic society.[13] In the context of the modern state, religious freedom is often regulated in the constitution and laws to guarantee the right of individuals to practice their religion without interference. However, in some countries, this freedom is still a controversial issue, especially when it clashes with social, cultural, or even state norms that restrict certain religious practices.[14] Therefore, religious freedom is not only about individual rights, but also related to state policies in regulating the religious life of its citizens.

However, religious freedom is not absolute and still has limitations in some aspects. In Islam, for example, there is a view that once a person chooses Islam, he is bound by the rules and laws of Islam that must be carried out.[15] Similarly, from an international legal perspective, religious freedom is restricted when religious practices have the potential to threaten public safety, public order, or violate the rights of others.[16] Thus, religious freedom needs to be understood as a right that must be upheld, but still within the corridor of applicable ethics and laws.

From these various perspectives, religious freedom can be defined as the right of every individual to choose, believe, and practice his religion or beliefs, while still paying attention to existing social, cultural, and legal restrictions. In Islam, this freedom is recognized, but it is also accompanied by moral and legal responsibilities for its adherents. Thus, religious freedom is not only about individual rights, but also about how those rights are implemented in social and political life, both in the context of Islam and in the legal system of the modern state.

Rethinking Freedom of Religion in Tafsir Literature

Freedom of religion is one of the issues that has received attention in the study of tafsir, especially in interpreting verses related to the choice of beliefs and interreligious relationships. Mufasir have diverse views in interpreting verses related to religious freedom, depending on the historical context, interpretation methodology, and background of their thoughts. One of the verses that is often studied in this context is QS. al-Baqarah (2): 256, *"La ikraha fi al-din"* (*there is no coercion in religion*), which is the basis for understanding that faith should be based on consciousness, not coercion. In addition to Al-Baqarah (2):256, freedom

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[13] Iskandar Zulkarnain, "Hubungan Antarkomunitas Agama Di Indonesia: Masalah Dan Penangananannya," *Kajian* 16, no. 4 (2011): 681–705, https://doi.org/10.22212/kajian.v16i4.540.

[14] Muhammad Iqbal Yunazwardi and Aulia Nabila, "Implementasi Norma Internasional Mengenai Kebebasan Beragama Dan Berkeyakinan Di Indonesia," *Indonesian Perspective* 6, no. 1 (2021): 1–21, https://doi.org/10.14710/ip.v6i1.37510.

[15] Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur`an*. J.1, 551.

[16] Muwaffiq Jufri, "Pembatasan Terhadap Hak Dan Kebebasan Beragama Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 1, no. 1 (2016): 40–47, https://doi.org/10.17977/um019v1i12016p040.

in choosing religion as an attitude of tolerance is also mentioned in Surah Al-Kafirūn (109): 6, "*lakum dīnukum wa liya al-Dīn*" (*for you is your religion, and for me my religion*).

According to Al-Razi in *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, the verse *la ikraha fi al-din* (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 256) shows that faith cannot be forced because the essence of faith must be born from belief and awareness, not from pressure or coercion. Al-Razi emphasized that if a person is forced to believe, then that faith will not have true meaning because true faith must come from understanding and accepting the heart. He also explained that Allah has given clear evidence of the truth of Islam, so that man has the ability to choose with full awareness.[17]

In addition, Al-Razi argues that this religious freedom is in line with the concept of testing (*ibtilā'*) in the life of the world. If faith is enforced by force, then the test will lose its meaning because people are not given the space to prove their faith of their own volition. Therefore, Islam allows man to choose his path after the truth is explained, as affirmed in other verses such as QS. Al-Kahfi [18]: 29, *"Whoever wants to believe, then believe, and whoever wants to disbelieve, then disbelieve."* However, Al-Razi also acknowledges that there are differences in the application of this verse in social and political contexts. He said that for the Scribes and Magi, forced conversion to Islam is not allowed because they have the option of paying *jizyah*. Meanwhile, the status of other groups is disputed in Islamic fiqh. Thus, although Islam in principle rejects coercion in religion, there are differences in its application depending on the legal and social conditions of the time.[18]

Thus, according to Al-Razi, this verse emphasizes that true faith cannot be forced and must be born from sincere belief. This verse also affirms man's freedom to choose his beliefs after getting an explanation of the truth. However, in the aspect of Islamic law, there are dynamics in its application, especially in relations with non-Muslims in Islamic society. The same opinion is also expressed by Al-Marāghī, who asserts that there is no compulsion in religion means that there is no compulsion for anyone to enter and embrace Islam.[19] According to him, faith is a form of obedience and submission of the heart that cannot be forced through pressure or threats. True faith can only grow through conviction born of convincing understanding and argumentation, not of external coercion. Therefore, Islam rejects all forms of coercion in matters of faith and emphasizes that faith must be born from a full awareness of the truth. If a person is forced to convert to Islam without sincere belief, then his faith has no real

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[17] Faḥru al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ Al-Ghaib* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981). J.7, 15

[18] Al-Rāzī. J.7, 15.

[19] Aḥmad Muṣṭafā Al-Marāghīy, *Tafsir Al-Marāghīy* (Mesir: Maṭbaʼah Muṣṭafā Al-Bānīy Al-Ḥalabīy, 1946). J.3, 15.

meaning, because true faith requires a willingness of the heart to submit to the teachings that he believes to be true. [20]

In addition, Al-Marāghī also asserts that this verse is a strong evidence that refutes the accusation that Islam was established by violence and sword. Some parties, both from among the enemies of Islam and some of its own followers, think that Islam only develops through coercion, in which people are offered two choices: accept Islam and survive or reject and face the sword. However, Al-Marāghī rejects this assumption and asserts that Islam spreads through da'wah based on argument and convincing evidence, not through threats or violence. If the spread of Islam is based on coercion, then it would be contrary to the basic principles of faith that must be born from freedom of heart and correct understanding. Therefore, Islam from the beginning emphasized that da'wah must be carried out with a persuasive approach, providing space for people to accept the teachings of Islam with full awareness without pressure.[21]

This interpretation of Al-Marāghī shows that Islam is a religion that prioritizes reason and understanding in accepting the truth. Islam does not only provide dogmatic teachings, but also encourages people to think, understand, and seek the truth based on the evidence given in the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet. Therefore, freedom of religion is not only a human right, but also part of the teachings of Islam that values the human ability to analyze and accept the truth with confidence. In conclusion, Al-Marāghī's commentary asserts that Islam does not justify coercion in religion and that the accusation of Islam developing through military force is a misunderstanding. On the contrary, Islam is a religion that respects human freedom to choose one's beliefs and build faith on the basis of strong arguments, not out of coercion or fear.

A little different, Quraish Shihab, interprets *that there is no coercion in religion* means that one should not be forced to convert to Islam. God does not need human faith, and if He wills, all humans can be made one equal people. It should be noted, that what is meant by no coercion in adhering to religion is adhering to its faith. That is, when a person has chosen Islam as his religion, he is bound by all his teachings and obligations. He cannot argue that freedom of religion means freedom not to carry out obligations such as prayer or abstinence from adultery, because faith carries consequences in the form of obedience to Islamic law. Therefore, freedom in religion does not mean freedom to do anything, but rather freedom to determine beliefs before choosing a religion.[22]

In addition, Quraish Shihab explained that coercion in religion is contrary to the essence of Islam which means peace. True peace can only be achieved if one chooses his or her beliefs with full awareness and sincerity, not because of

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[20] Al-Marāghīy. J.3, 16.

[21] Al-Marāghīy. J.3, 16-17.

[22] Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur`an*. J.1, 551.

pressure or threats. God has clearly explained the way of truth through His revelation, so that man has the capacity to choose it freely. In his view, it is very natural for everyone to follow the right path, because the benefits are clear, and not to be carried off into a misguided path that brings harm. If a person continues to reject the truth that has become manifest, it indicates that there is a problem in him. Islam does not impose faith because the truth itself is clear enough to be used as a guide for those who are willing to think and seek guidance.[23]

Furthermore, he compared this concept to a condition where a person is forced to take bitter medicine for the sake of his health. Coercion is necessary if a person does not understand the benefits, such as a young child who does not yet understand the importance of medication. However, for those who are mature and have common sense, coercion is not necessary because they can understand the difference between right and wrong. A person who does not know the truth is not punished if he has not arrived at the correct understanding, such as a child or a person who does not have access to religious knowledge. However, for those who have the potential to understand the truth but ignore it, they will still be held accountable. Thus, religious freedom is granted because the path of truth has been explained, and each individual is responsible for the choices he or she makes. Islam does not need coercion to spread its teachings because the truth is clear enough to be a guide for thinking people.[24]

Tafsir Quraish Shihab on QS. Al-Baqarah verse 256 (*la ikraha fi al-din*) has a close correlation with his interpretation of QS. Al-Kafirun verse 6. In his interpretation of QS. Al-Kafirun, he emphasized that this verse is not a form of recognition of the truth of the faith of the polytheists, but a statement that affirms the principle of freedom of religion. The phrase *"for you is your religion and for me is my religion"* indicates that each individual has the right to practice his or her own beliefs without any coercion on each other. This is in line with the concept of *la ikraha fi al-din*, where faith cannot be imposed because Islam must be accepted with sincere awareness and belief, not because of external pressure.[25]

Furthermore, Quraish Shihab explained that Islam does not demand compromise in faith, as proposed by the Meccan polytheists who wanted an exchange of worship. Islam rejects compromise in faith but allows differences in religious practice without any compulsion to accept Islam. This principle is also affirmed in the Qur'an. Saba' [34]: 25, which states that each group is responsible for its own beliefs and deeds. Therefore, QS. Al-Kafirun verse 6 is not a form of religious relativism, but a statement that in social life, everyone is given the

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[23] Shihab. J.1, 551-552.
[24] Shihab. J.1, 552.
[25] Shihab. J.15, 581.

freedom to practice his beliefs, while the ultimate responsibility remains in the hands of Allah.[26]

Thus, Quraish Shihab's interpretation of QS. Al-Kafirun 6 and QS. Al-Baqarah 256 has similarities in emphasizing freedom of religion as an individual right, but with the caveat that Islam maintains its principle of absolute truth without coercion on others. Faith in Islam should be based on belief, not coercion or compromise of faith. In the social context, differences in beliefs must be addressed with mutual respect, because accountability for religious choices is a matter between the individual and God. Islam does not demand coercion, but neither does it recognize the mixing of faiths, so that everyone has the freedom to hold fast to his or her beliefs without intervention.

According to Al-Marāghī, the verse *"lakum dīnukum wa liya dīn"* in the Qur'an. Al-Kāfirūn verse 6 affirms that each individual has the freedom to practice his or her own beliefs without coercion. However, this freedom does not mean the recognition of the truth of all religions, but rather a firm statement that Islam will not compromise in terms of faith. Islam gives freedom for polytheists to remain in their faith, but it also affirms that Muslims must remain firm in their teachings. This concept is in line with the principle *of la ikraha fi al-din* in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 256, where Islam rejects coercion in religion, because faith must grow from sincere awareness and belief, not from coercion or coercion.

Al-Marāghī also emphasizes that this verse teaches tolerance in social life. In social life, Muslims and non-Muslims must coexist with mutual respect for each other's beliefs. Islam does not impose its teachings on others, but neither does it accept the mixing of faiths. As mentioned in QS. Saba' [34]:25, *"We have our charity, and you have your charity."* This shows that each individual is responsible for his or her own deeds, and that in the end, it is God who will make decisions on differences of belief among people. Thus, Islam affirms religious freedom in the context of the individual's responsibility for his or her choices before Allah.[27]

This approach strengthens the interpretation of Quraish Shihab which emphasizes that Islam does not require coercion in its spread and prioritizes da'wah based on argument and argumentation. Islam rejects compromise in faith, but still respects the right of others to choose their beliefs. Therefore, this verse is the basis for building harmonious social relations without sacrificing the principles of Islamic monotheism. In other words, Islam gives people the freedom to choose, but each choice has its own consequences before Allah.

Al-Rāzi gives a more concrete interpretation of this verse, according to which he says the verse *"Lakum dīnukum wa liya dīn"* in QS. Al-Kāfirūn (109):6 has various meanings that affirm the principle of difference of belief between Muslims and polytheists. Ibn Abbas interprets that this phrase means *"For you*

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[26] Shihab. J.15, 581-582.

[27] Al-Marāghīy, *Tafsir Al-Marāghīy*. J.30, 256.

your disbelief and for me monotheism and sincerity towards Allah." However, this does not mean that Allah gives permission for disbelief, because the Messenger of Allah was sent to uphold monotheism and prevent disbelief. This verse contains an element of threat, as Allah says , *"Do as you please."* (QS. Fussilat (41):40).[28] In addition, this verse can also be understood as a call not to invite the Prophet to sharia, as well as an affirmation that he would never leave his religion, even though the polytheists remained in their faith.

Some mufasir also understand the word *dīn* in this verse as *hisāb* (calculation or reply). This means that everyone will be rewarded according to their beliefs and deeds, as affirmed in QS. Saba' (34):25 *"We have our charity, and you have your charity."* Another view says that this verse means *"For you the reward of your religion, and for me the reward of my religion,"* which means that the consequences of each belief have been determined, either in the form of reward or punishment. There are also those who understand *dīn* as a punishment or rule (*'uqūbah*), as in QS. An-Nūr (24):2 *"Do not have mercy on them to hinder you from carrying out the law of Allah."* In this case, the polytheists will receive punishment from God, while they cannot punish the Prophet and the Muslims, because the idols they worship have no power whatsoever.[29]

Al-Razi also noted that this verse shows the principle of exclusivity of belief, which *is "For you your religion, not for anyone else, and for me it is my religion, not for anyone other than me."* This is in line with the principles in QS. An-Najm (53):38-39, *"A man will not bear the sins of others, and man will only gain according to his efforts."* Thus, the Prophet Muhammad was only in charge of delivering tracts, while the decision to accept or reject was in the hands of each individual. Therefore, this verse is not just a statement of separation in faith, but it also affirms that each person is responsible for his own faith before God. However, Al-Razi also criticizes the habit of some people who use this verse in the context of ending a debate without seeking deeper understanding, because the main purpose of the Qur'an is to be contemplated and practiced, not just used as a formal expression in conversation.[30]

The above Urain shows that religious freedom in the study of Islamic interpretation has a strong basis in the Qur'an, especially in the verse *la ikraha fi al-din* (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 256) and *lakum dinukum wa liya din* (QS. Al-Kafirun (109): 6). Mufasir such as Al-Razi, Al-Maraghi, and Quraish Shihab emphasized that Islam does not justify coercion in choosing beliefs, because faith must be based on sincere awareness and belief. However, once a person embraces Islam, he is bound by its laws and teachings, as Quraish Shihab emphasizes that freedom in religion does not mean freedom in ignoring religious obligations.

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[28] Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ Al-Ghaib*. J.32, 332.

[29] Al-Rāzī. J.32, 332.

[30] Al-Rāzī. J.32, 332-333

Al-Razi highlighted that religious freedom is in line with the concept of testing (*ibtila'*), where humans are given freedom of choice after receiving an explanation of the truth. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that there are differences in the application of this verse in the social and legal context, especially in relation to the relationship between Islam and non-Muslims. Meanwhile, Al-Maraghi emphasized that Islam spreads through da'wah based on argument and evidence, not by violence or coercion. He also refuted the accusation that Islam developed through coercion, because this religion prioritizes reason and understanding in accepting the truth.

In addition, the interpretation of QS. Al-Kafirun verse 6 shows that religious freedom in Islam is not a recognition of the truth of all religions, but a form of social tolerance that maintains the exclusivity of the Islamic faith. Islam rejects compromise in faith but respects the right of the individual to choose his or her own beliefs. Thus, the concept of religious freedom in Islam not only upholds the right of individuals to belief, but also affirms that every choice has consequences before Allah.

The Future of Religious Freedom in Opportunities and Threats

Freedom of religion is one of the universally accepted human rights. It allows everyone to choose, believe, and practice the teachings of a religion without any form of coercion or violence from others. In a multireligious society, pluralism is the basis for strengthening harmony and coexistence between various religions. In addition, this freedom protects the rights of religious minorities from discrimination.[31] However, Islam recognizes this freedom as reflected in Qs. Al-Baqarah (2:256) which states that it is permissible not to follow a particular religion. Unfortunately, in reality, embracing pluralism in religious freedom presents great challenges at the individual level as well as the larger space. Therefore, more research needs to be done on the opportunities and risks associated with the implementation of religious freedom in society.

One of the main opportunities of religious freedom is that it can help encourage greater tolerance within and among different groups of society and create a more harmonious society. When individuals are able to practice their religion as they wish, the likelihood of religious conflict is significantly reduced. In addition, the recognition and protection of diversity allows for interfaith collaboration in social, educational, and even economic endeavors.[32] This can encourage greater social and humanitarian cohesion in a society. In some

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[31] Abdul Hafiz et al., "Toleransi Beragama Dalam Masyarakat Plural : Inisiatif Pendidikan, Kebijakan Publik, Dan Peran Media Dalam Membentuk Sikap Toleransi," *Rayah Al-Islam* 8, no. 1 (2024): 120–30, https://doi.org/10.37274/rais.v8i1.916.

[32] Desi Sukenti and Ucep Hermawan, "Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama : Memahami Dialog Agama Perspektif Teori Otto Scharmer Dalam Program Kelas Penggerak Gusdurian," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah* / 9, no. 2 (2024), https://doi.org/10.25299/al-thariqah.2024.vol9(2).17838.

countries, religious freedom has been associated with more favorable outcomes in social integration. Populations that allow religious freedom tend to be more receptive to social diversity and change. Therefore, religious freedom serves as an important factor in promoting a civilized society that upholds mutual respect.

From a human rights perspective, religious freedom is one of the basic freedoms that must be protected by the state and society. According to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to profess a religion, change a religion or belief, and practice it freely without restriction.[33] These people include not only the majority, but also minorities who are often discriminated against or face social pressure. With religious freedom, people have the right to practice their faith without fear of being intimidated or persecuted for it. However, in reality, some countries choose to restrict these freedoms for various reasons such as political stability or national security.[34] Discriminatory policies are often implemented under the pretext of encouraging social cohesion, but these policies only serve to deepen injustices for certain groups. Therefore, it is important to ensure that there is always religious freedom for all people without infringing on the rights of others.

In addition to interreligious conflicts, religious freedom is also threatened by the practice of religion for certain purposes, so much so that religion is portrayed through politics. Many countries have seen the issue of a person's freedom to practice religion as a means to rally political support or to discredit opponents.[35] Policies rooted in the basis of religious freedom are often a tool for the conquest of religiously active minority groups that restrict the victim-specific religious practices.[36] Such practices can create social injustice and worsen interreligious relations in a particular country. In addition, the politicization of religion can hinder legislation that is supposed to be impartial towards all religious groups.[37] For this reason, the practice of religion in its free form should not include any political considerations that could undermine its primary purpose. The government should provide policies on religious freedom that ensure the protection of all citizens without discrimination.

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[33] Majelis Umum PBB, "Dekiarasi Universal Hak-Hak Asasi Manusia."

[34] Enika Maya Oktavia, "Uji Proporsonalitas UUD 1945: Pembatasan Hak Beragama Dalam Pembubaran Hizbut Thahrir," *JURNAL RESTORASI HUKUM* 7, no. 2 (2024), https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/eaax2f69.

[35] Ahmad Syafii Maarif, "Politik Identitas Dan Masa Depan Pluralisme Indonesia," in *Politik Identitas Dan Masa Depan Pluralisme Kita* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2012). Sec. 4.

[36] Muhammad Husni Fahruddin, "Rekontruksi Regulasi Kebebasan Beragama Dan Berkeyakinan Dalam Menjamin Perlakuan Hukum Berkeadilan" (Disertasi di Universitas Sultan Agung Semarang, 2023). Sec. 174.

[37] Bakhtiar Hasan and Ayub Mursalin, "Konflik Komunal Mengatasnamakan Agama Di Indonesia: Analisis Terhadap Konflik Ahmadiyah Dalam Pemberitaan Media, 2005-2011," *Kontekstualita* 26, no. 1 (2011): 71–115.

In the legal context, the greatest challenge to religious freedom is the balance between individual rights and social interests. Many countries restrict religious freedom by maintaining public order and national security. However, these restrictions often raise ethical and legal questions about how far a country can regulate individual freedoms. If restrictions are over-implemented, this can lead to human rights violations. On the other hand, if religious freedom is left behind without clear regulations, there may be conflicts with social values that have long been passed down by society. Therefore, fair and proportionate regulations are needed to regulate religious freedom to maintain harmony. Therefore, the state must play an active role in ensuring freedom of religion without infringing on the rights of others.

Another challenge that needs to be considered is public acceptance of religious freedom. In some communities, religious freedom is often seen as a threat to long-held religious traditions and values. Fear of losing religious identity has led some groups to reject the concept of religious freedom absolutely. This raises a dilemma between maintaining tradition and accepting individual freedom in religion. Therefore, it is important to educate the public about the concept of religious freedom so that it is not misunderstood. With a better understanding, religious freedom can be accepted as part of basic human rights without sacrificing cultural and religious values.

Despite the challenges, religious freedom still has an important role to play in creating a peaceful and just society. For this reason, there needs to be a more serious effort in building awareness of the importance of religious freedom. Education, interfaith dialogue, and inclusive policies are strategic steps in safeguarding these freedoms from being abused. With the right approach, religious freedom can be a means to strengthen interfaith relations and reduce the potential for conflict. Therefore, all parties, both the government, religious leaders, and the community, must play an active role in supporting religious freedom. Thus, religious freedom can be the foundation for the creation of a more harmonious and dignified life.

Ultimately, religious freedom is not only about the individual's right to choose and practice his or her beliefs, but also about how those rights can be applied in a balanced way in social life. Society and the state have a responsibility to create an environment that supports religious freedom without creating tension or discrimination. Therefore, an approach that prioritizes a balance between freedom and fair regulation is the main key in maintaining stability in religious life. With awareness of the opportunities and threats that exist, religious freedom can continue to be fought for as a human right that brings benefits to all parties.

Conclusion

Freedom of religion is a fundamental right that allows every individual to choose, believe, and practice religion without coercion. In Islam, this concept is affirmed in QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 256, which shows that faith must be born from consciousness, not coercion. This principle is also affirmed in the Qur'an. Al-Kafirun (109): 6, which affirms respect for differences of belief without confusing creed. Mufasirs such as Al-Razi, Al-Maraghi, and Quraish Shihab affirm that freedom of religion is part of the sunnatullah in human life, but it still has limits in practice. The limit of religious freedom in Islam lies in the commitment after a person chooses a belief. As explained by Quraish Shihab, freedom to choose religion does not mean the freedom to ignore religious obligations once a person becomes a Muslim. Islam emphasizes that faith carries consequences in the form of obedience to religious laws and teachings. In addition, from a social and legal perspective, religious freedom is also limited by moral principles and public safety. In Islamic fiqh, for example, the status of non-Muslim groups has its own rules, such as the ability to pay *jizyah* to the People of the Book as a form of recognition of their existence in Muslim society.

Opportunities for religious freedom include strengthening tolerance and social harmony in a multicultural society. By respecting the religious rights of every individual, social stability can be maintained, and interreligious interactions become more harmonious. This freedom also provides protection for minority groups to avoid discrimination. However, threats to religious freedom cannot be ignored either, such as its misuse for political gain, the potential for interreligious conflicts, or the imposition of certain values that are contrary to the majority's beliefs. In addition, extremism and excessive religious relativism can blur the line between freedom and violations of the religious values upheld by a community. Therefore, religious freedom must be understood in a balance between individual rights and social responsibility. Islam recognizes freedom of religion but still insists that every choice has consequences before God. The state and society have an important role in keeping these freedoms from being abused or causing social tensions. With an inclusive approach, interreligious dialogue, and balanced policies, religious freedom can be a means to build a more harmonious and just civilization.

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