

## Reexamining Salatiga as a Tolerant City in Java: An Exposure of Lesser-Known Facts

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### Abstract

Salatiga has been known as one of the most tolerant cities in Java and Indonesia. Such an achievement refers to the 2021 Tolerant City Index (*Indeks Kota Toleran*) report released by the SETARA Institute that provides a baseline or assessment of the city government's performance in managing harmony, tolerance, Indonesian national insight, and social inclusion. This article wants to reexamine whether Salatiga is truly a tolerant city and fully implements freedom of religion and belief. The study uses a qualitative approach to interpret interactions between various religious followers in Salatiga. It employs Bielefeldt's analysis and human rights perspectives to reveal the events that actually happened. This study found that the people of Salatiga claim to live in harmony and maintain religious freedom, even though conflicts still occur occasionally. Such conflicts, for example, are seen in disputes about the IAIN Salatiga' choir team performing at the church and in several social conflicts between Muslims and Christians. Besides, the existence of several religion-based communities, such as Muslim cemeteries, Muslim housing, and Muslim campuses, also justifies the fact of social disharmony in Salatiga because they are not in accordance with the principle of freedom of religion.

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*Salatiga dikenal sebagai salah satu kota paling toleran di Jawa dan Indonesia. Capaian tersebut mengacu pada laporan Indeks Kota Toleran (IKT) 2021 yang dirilis SETARA Institute yang memberikan baseline atau penilaian terhadap kinerja pemerintah kota dalam*

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*mengelola kerukunan, toleransi, wawasan kebangsaan Indonesia, dan inklusi sosial. Artikel ini ingin mengkaji ulang apakah Salatiga benar-benar kota yang toleran dan menerapkan sepenuhnya kebebasan beragama dan berkeyakinan. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif untuk memaknai interaksi antara berbagai pemeluk agama di Salatiga. Kajian ini menggunakan analisis Bielefeldt dan perspektif hak asasi manusia untuk mengungkap peristiwa yang sebenarnya terjadi. Kajian ini menemukan bahwa masyarakat Salatiga mengaku hidup rukun dan menjaga kebebasan beragama, meski terkadang konflik masih terjadi. Konflik-konflik tersebut, misalnya, terlihat dalam perselisihan pendapat tentang tim paduan suara IAIN Salatiga yang tampil di gereja dan dalam beberapa konflik sosial antara umat Islam dan Kristen. Selain itu, keberadaan beberapa komunitas berbasis agama, seperti kuburan muslim, perumahan muslim, dan kampus muslim, juga turut membenarkan fakta disharmoni sosial di Salatiga karena hal ini tidak sesuai dengan prinsip kebebasan beragama.*

**Keywords:** conflict; freedom; Salatiga; tolerance

## Introduction

Salatiga is known as the most tolerant city in Indonesia, the ranking ranked by research from the SETARA Institute. The indicators used include government regulations, social regulations, government actions, and religious demographics. From these four indicators, the equivalent institute reduces to several aspects, which are development plans in the form of a Regional Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMD: *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah*) and other supporting legal products; discriminatory policies; statements of key officials about intolerance events; actual actions related to events; intolerance occurrences; civil society dynamics related to intolerance occurrences; religious heterogeneity of the population; and religiosity social inclusion (SETARA Institute, 2020). The specified indicators can be a representation to measure a city's tolerance level.

The concept of tolerance is not available in laws and regulations. Tolerance is a derivative concept starting from the 1945 Constitution Article 29, Decree of the People's Consultative Assembly No. II/MPR/1988, and Law No.1/PNPS/1965 on the Prevention of Religious Abuse or Blasphemy. However, the word "tolerance" does not exist in these three regulations.

Meanwhile, Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution discusses the topic closer to religious freedom.

The clause that the state guarantees the freedom of every resident to embrace their respective religions emerges as a form of freedom of religion. In the International Conference on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), freedom of religion belongs to a non-derogable right, as freedom of religion is as significant as freedom of thought (Ahmad, 2016). In the Sirakusa Convention, freedom of religion is controlled by public order, public safety, public health, and public morals. The restrictions indicate the intersection of people's rights. In this regard, tolerance becomes a concept that can be inserted into implementing these restrictions. With a more implementable idea and not as broad as religious freedom, tolerance has become more popular, one being a study by SETARA Institute.

The result of SETARA Institute in tolerance studies has been introduced previously. Many studies focusing on religious tolerance in Salatiga have concluded something similar. The role of FKUB - *Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (Religious Harmony Forum) Salatiga City in understanding the community is considered effective in creating tolerant conditions. Leaders of all religions are also often present in various city-level activities. In addition, the proximity of several mosques and churches also symbolizes the tolerant life in Salatiga (Nuryani & Taufiq, 2019). Nevertheless, the results of this study have yet reached the level of religious power conflicts analysis and claims of cultural symbols "forced" to become religious symbols.

Regarding religious power contestation, religious and political figures possess much authority. However, in the context of tolerance, it can be fulfilled when the implementation can run properly. Therefore, stakeholder efforts continue with programs that bring together cross-religious and ethnic groups regularly. The support of the Salatiga City government, especially FKUB, is vital in carrying out various activities to achieve religious harmony (Oktavian & Turtiantoro, 2020). This condition is due to the diverse religious and ethnic entities in Salatiga. Once again, efforts have been made using a bureaucratic approach. Thus, the narrative in social reality has yet to

be read. Approaching religious leaders can initially create religious harmony, although the implementation might experience mixed dynamics.

When religious leaders become the sole focus of the approach, the space for the community becomes blurred. The meetings initiated by the city government cannot be said to be the primary method of creating harmony, let alone conflict resolution. In this case, the distance between religious leaders and the community is a contributing factor. Mutual understanding meetings between FKUB administrators and other religious institutions do not provide answers when a Salatiga community has difficulty finding a place to live because of an assertion on a (Muslim) housing location.

However, from these efforts, there are also contradictory narratives. For example, when Muslims join a discussion in interpreting the issue of Christianization in Salatiga, it shows that Salatiga is a Christian City (Permata et al., 2016). Likewise, there was a struggle over the Cultivation Rights Title (HGU – *Hak Guna Usaha*) in the Salib Putih area, where Muslims desired to make this location an Islamic Center (Permata et al., 2016). These two realities appear that the community has yet to understand and articulate religious freedom fully. The following context of tolerance is part of religious freedom.

Data in 2019 revealed that Muslims were still the majority, with 154,324 people, followed by Protestants with 30,698 people, Catholics with 9,110 people, Hindus with 109 people, Buddhists with 741 people, and others with 28 people. With this number, the number of places of worship, mosques, and *mushallas* is still the majority, with a total of 572. Meanwhile, there were 92 Protestant Churches, two Catholic Churches, one temple, and eight monasteries (BPS Kota Salatiga, 2020). Those data came from Citizen cards (KTP – *Kartu Tanda Penduduk*). However, in reality, many people who do not have Salatiga ID cards also have religious and ethnic diversity, such as students and workers.

Furthermore, the mobility of community diversity is partly due to two universities and several companies. It makes relations between religions dynamics. People often give respect because of religious differences. Many

stories and studies (including SETARA Institute) confirm it. On the one side, these two campuses are symbols of tolerance, but on the other hand, they are a form of academic contestation (Ali et al., 2020). Academic competition, which must exist on every campus, sometimes indirectly becomes blurred by mixing religious doctrines.

However, from observations, there is significant and small-scale friction. The incident with the Salip Putih and the IAIN Salatiga<sup>1</sup> choir received a considerable escalation of responses. When the IAIN Salatiga choir performed at the church in 2018 (Susanto, 2018), many people, including religious (Islamic) leaders, questioned it. In the view of religious freedom, it is included in the external and manifest aspects. The form of expression is corrected because it is only performed in art and does not involve the imposition of beliefs (Bagir et al., 2019).

In more daily cases, in addition to respect in the name of religion, there are minor disagreements. Muslim neighborhoods and Muslim cemeteries are one example. The property ownership claim makes an explicit restriction by prohibiting other religions from residing. The construction of regulations regarding the problem is not available in the law. Law No. 1/2011 on Housing and Settlement Areas does not recognize specific mention of Islamic housing, Sharia, or others.

In the freedom of religion, there are restrictions regarding public order, public safety, public health, and public morals. When viewed from public order refers to an arrangement that ensures the functioning of society. In addition, public order is a set of principles that become the foundation of society. Thus, respect for human rights also belongs to the concept (Bagir et al., 2019). Therefore, when the objects are accommodation and Muslim cemeteries, it is not restricted while still in a stable condition of order, security, and morality.

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Finally, at this point, it is apparent that the results of the “Salatiga City is the most tolerant” study should be re-read. The big question is how freedom of religion and belief in Salatiga is declared the most tolerant city. In reality, not everyone can accept and respect differences based on religion. This re-reading can find an alternative formula to minimize the potential for conflict.

### **Freedom of Religion and Belief**

Religious rights appear as something absolute and inherent in every individual. The state does not have the full power to force individuals to choose a particular religion. The consequence of forcing individuals to choose a religion violates religious rights. Thus, every country must protect religion, beliefs, and religious behavior and activities. In addition, in its implementation, the construction of houses of worship, rituals, and religious traditions may not be prohibited as long as they do not violate other fundamental rights.

In practice, religion is often identified with culture. Some people think that the two contradict each other, although culture and religion are not that different. Many cultural practices are “religious,” and religious concepts are part of the culture (Abdulla, 2018). Thus, the two are one unit, which is not dichotomous. If culture has freedom, religion also gets the same space in freedom.

Freedom of religion is a derivative of the right to religion, a civil right, at the ICCPR on December 16, 1966. The right to religion became international law, which was finally given complete protection (Parker, 2006). One of the reasons for its emergence is to protect minority religious groups. In a “religious state,” some religious groups are still considered “non-religious” (Carpenter, 2017). Internationally, the agreement has been able to protect all religions and beliefs.

The concept of religious freedom, which is quite popular, was written by Heiner Bielefeldt. He is a UN special rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief (KBB - *Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan*). According to Bielefeldt, apart from respecting the KBB, the state also should protect

freedom from third-party intervention. The state must also encourage tolerance and respect for religious diversity (Bielefeldt, 2019). In this section, the state must realize conditions for religious rights as needed. In addition, its implementation is to realize tolerance and prevent violence in the name of religion. Likewise, it relates to the rights of parents to children regarding religion.

### **State and Religious Freedom**

The state should protect, respect, and promote human rights. In protecting human rights and religious freedom, the state must react quickly when violations of religious freedom occur. One way to do this is by sympathizing with victims and providing public assistance. The state must also respect religious freedom by not identifying with one discriminatory religion or belief. Likewise, with the obligation to promote human rights in the KBB, the state must guarantee and create a framework that includes all stakeholders (Bielefeldt, 2019). It indicates that the state cannot be a subject that favors one religion and maintains inter-religious relations.

The guarantee of religious freedom has several approaches related to the state. There are variations on the normative basis for freedom of religion, namely individual autonomy and purity of personal consciousness. In addition, it is essential to emphasize the non-secular and non-liberal basis for religious freedom (Hefner, 2014). Some secular European countries still have views on interpreting international conventions. The state has an essential role in taking a position to ratify the European Convention (Evans, 2001). Liberal and secular approaches are crucial to protect the freedom of religion fully.

### **Tolerance and Violence in the Name of Religion**

The concept of tolerance is not contradictory to freedom of religion. Both can support each other when religious freedom is reduced to tolerance (behavior). The issue of tolerance is often used as a tool for political ends. Instead of explaining exploitation and injustice, tolerance and intolerance are often chosen. Intolerance exists as a form of injustice; the short solution is

tolerance (Sutanto & Ahnaf, 2018). Tolerance is usually raised due to violence in the name of religion.

Violence in the name of religion can be categorized in several ways: violence involving mass organizations within the same religious community, violence involving the state acting on behalf of the official religion, violence involving communities of the same religion, and violence involving institutions holding religious authority from that religion the same (Isnaini, 2017). Everything involves many parties because there are always weaker and marginal parties in violence.

### **Rights of Children and Parents**

According to Bielefeldt, the interpretation of “the state must respect the child’s right to freedom of religion” includes when children follow the religion of their parents. It is explained by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which also regulates the right of children to recognize and practice their religion. Then, the state must also respect parents’ obligations and rights, including practicing their religion (Bielefeldt, 2019). Simply put, the state must protect and respect the parents; children have the same rights.

In a universal sense, there is no valid reason to abolish parental and child rights. In addition, there is no obligation to raise children “neutral” regarding religion. It can also be seen in the state’s neutrality in regulating religious rights for children, such as in the world of education and wars between parents in the family. More specifically, in education, the state has an essential role in providing broad access to children’s religion (Temperman, 2010). It often happens when the intervention of educational institutions forces children to perform the rituals of one particular religion.

### **Between Religious Freedom and Tolerance: A Review of Studies and Public Policy**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Chapter 18 guarantees freedom of religion. This chapter explicitly states that everyone has the right to choose and practice their religion and even to change



religions. It means the freedom to choose a religion or change religions should not be limited or prohibited. The state should not oblige its citizens to choose a religion. In other words, the state must protect citizens regardless of their religion.

Chapter 18 of the ICCPR further explains that the freedom to determine and practice religion can only be limited by legal provisions to protect security, order, health, and public morals. The state is also obliged to respect the freedom of parents to ensure religious education for their children according to their beliefs. This provision explicitly gives everyone the right to practice religion, which does not violate security, health, and morality. Legal provisions must determine the indicators of these three. Thus, cases of banning or destroying places of worship often occur. In that case, the state must present to protect both religious groups involved in the conflict with security and order considerations.

It has also been ratified in Indonesia in Law 39 of 1999, Chapter 22, that everyone is free to embrace their respective religions and to worship according to their religion. The community and the government must obey these provisions. The concept of freedom of religion in Law 39 of 1999 explains that a person should not be forced to embrace a religion and should not even be prohibited if he chooses not to have religion or God. One of the conceptual derivatives then appears to be tolerance.

The word tolerance has yet to be found in legislation, although this diction is more familiar than freedom of religion. In a simple sense, tolerance can be interpreted as a way for the life of religious freedom to be well protected (Handayani, 2010). Tolerance for many people is an appreciation of differences, including religion.

Beyond the principle of tolerance, religious freedom has a preconceived notion of all forms of religious belief and expression. For liberals, religion is not free because they are required to obey religious teachings. It is not the case for Bielefeldt, as being a religiously observant individual is the most profound freedom ever experienced. One of KBB's principles is that equality applies to people, not their religion. This principle does not see equality in

religion because diversity is so complex that there is no reference point when there is a clash of claims (Bielefeldt & Wiener, 2021). The more complex GBV (Gender-based Violence) concept provides more narrative detail than tolerance.

Freedom of religion is essential in building the relationship between religion and the state by not always using the liberal basis of secularism. The first reason is that religious freedom has various normative/ethical bases. Secondly, implementing freedom of religion in many places is not only an ontological issue, but there are efforts by religious leaders to promote the identity and interests of their groups (Hefner, 2014). These two reasons provide conceptual assurance about the varied foundations of thinking and the realities that occur in freedom of religion.

The freedom of religion that gives rise to tolerance can be contextualized with Salatiga City, awarded the most tolerant city. The SETARA Institute's research is an asset in exploring the concept of religious freedom in Salatiga. Tolerance stems from Salatiga's religious diversity, which has existed since the colonial period, although historically, this diversity has caused problems.

Salatiga became the center of Zending activities during the colonial period in 1853. Salatiga Zending was an evangelistic organization founded by a Dutch evangelist, Elizabeth Jacoba Le Jollede Wildt. The main activity center was the laborers on the coffee plantations around Salatiga, and initially, 55 people were baptized into Christianity. Education became the primary method of evangelism by establishing a teachers' school in Tingkir in 1916. The growth of Zending in Salatiga led to the city becoming a meeting place for Christian organizations starting in 1940 (Sidik, 2019). One of the considerations of the colonial government in choosing Salatiga as a Zending and recreation area was the cool air and temperature similar to Europe.

On the other hand, organizationally, Islam in Salatiga began with the activities of Muhammadiyah in 1929. Dr. Satiman was the figure interested in establishing the Loehoer Islamic Boarding School, which was well received by the community with donations. One of the efforts to raise this Islamic

boarding school was to buy a house owned by Kwik Djoen Eng, a bank owned then. After the Islamic organization grew in 1948, a Persatoean Ummat Islam Salatiga committee was formed to unite the ulama in Salatiga and its surroundings (Sidik, 2019). In addition, the colonial government's system of racialized interests created considerable distance among the community. It can be one of the causes of horizontal segmentation, including religion.

After the Reformation Period, the phenomenon of religious freedom has become more dynamic. Forms of attack and violence are also balanced with harmony, tolerance, and the like. Attacks and violence in the name of religion often appear, including in the media. The destruction of a Hindu temple in Bali in 2005 and the 858 churches vandalized in 2001 are only a few examples that can be seen (Isnaini, 2017). At the provincial level in Central Java, intolerance cases increased in 2016 by 25% from the previous year (Sucahyo, 2017).

Looking at the cases in Salatiga City, the study results mainly summarize tolerance. Cases of religious conflict "smelled" in significant escalations are rare. In addition to the scope of the study, differences in the concepts used may also be a factor in more studies on tolerance. Academics have yet to understand the considerable difference between freedom of religion and tolerance.

Referring to the UDHR and ICCPR agreements, freedom of religion must be seen broadly. Article 5 of ICCPR states that there should be no reduction of rights except under certain conditions (Isnur, 2016). It means that, including for the Salatiga people, there is no justification for any reduction in religious rights. It can be seen when there is still a struggle for land at the Church of Salib Putih.

Another point in freedom of religion is about the spread of religion. If it is done through intimidation and propaganda, it is not protected and can be restricted by human rights restrictions (Dja'far, 2016). Although the meaning is debatable, spreading religion should not be literally intimidating. By looking at policy references and discourse about both, it will be more

effective if tolerance takes conceptual reference from freedom of religion. In the end, the meeting point of tolerance and freedom of religion can be seen when the more significant the tolerance, the greater the possibility of guaranteeing freedom of religion. Implementing freedom of religion or belief that requires state intervention can start by looking at the reality of tolerance as a cultural basis in society.

### **The Reality of Religious Freedom and Harmony in Salatiga**

Religious freedom and harmony in Salatiga can be further explored as a follow-up to SETARA Institute's research. As in previous studies, the people of Salatiga stated they are tolerant, harmonious, and the like. The close proximity of churches and mosques and mutual cooperation during religious events are among the narratives that emerge. In addition, living in a coexisting religion, people more often accept differences. This section will explain the reality of religious freedom in more detail. One of the observations can often be seen in several families of different religions. Here is one story of a family of different religions obtained from a relative (friend) of one of his children.

“One family of two children lives in the Tegalrejo Sub-district. The father and first child are Muslims, while the mother and second child are Christians. Since childhood, there was no coercion on the children to choose any religion. The father and mother had the same opportunity to teach their respective religions. The first and second children had the same experience of being invited to the mosque and church as a child. The invitation even came from his uncle and aunt. The family has a goal that children should not be forced to determine their religion when they grow up as the parents have different religions” (informant W).

“In the story of the first Muslim child, he chose Islam because his heart was more comfortable when invited to the mosque. He went through a long process to find the truth about God, at least in Islam and Narcissism. Ustadz and Pastor became one of the references to find the truth. He is now 27 years old and claims to have decided to become a Muslim in senior high school. Until now, at Christmas, the child still celebrates as a form of respect for his mother and sister. Once when he was still working in Jakarta and approaching Christmas, he only got two days off according to government regulations. He traveled home to

celebrate Christmas with his family by air. Even though it was only one night with a considerable distance (Jakarta-Salatiga), he thought it was more valuable than staying in Jakarta. Likewise, for his younger brother, he did not receive coercion from his parents to follow his father's or mother's religion. He chose Christianity also not based on the balance of the number of religions in the family. Christianity was chosen more on the consideration of comfort in the heart. Not much different during Ramadan and holidays such as Eid al-Fitr, he and his mother still prepare all their needs, including consumption, even though they do not believe" (informant W).

However, similar narratives are not fully aligned in family and broader religious freedom contexts. Other forms of different religious families also rise to similar dynamics. In the context of these families, what happens is more about choosing to change religions due to marriage factors.

"One story emerged from a family from Jakarta. The short story is that they were still of different religions when they married. The husband was Catholic, and the wife was Muslim. Nevertheless, when they moved to Salatiga, they were constrained to take care of the administration because their marriage was not yet legal. When taking care of the administration (Marriage Certificate) at the KUA, the husband was finally "forced" to convert to Islam. Apart from only requiring him to say the shahada, the KUA also asked him to practice praying. After that, he became Muslim, and the marriage certificate was issued" (informant W).

As a result, families are also diverse, impacting the social relations that take place daily. When Christians are more selective in choosing a place to live, Muslims avoid the location of the Christian communities. The claim of "Muslim" neighborhood for some Christians in Salatiga is a form of anxiety. They ended up having to choose alternative "national" neighborhoods. Information on "Muslim" and "national" neighborhoods can be easily found on social media such as Facebook.

In higher education, when the issue of Christianization arises, it is often discussed in Muslim groups (including IAIN Salatiga). The narrative that emerges seems to blame the spread of Christianity in Muslim locations. With persuasive approaches such as economics, some people decided to convert (Permata et al., 2016). The existence of IAIN Salatiga as a representation of

Islamic education in Salatiga can provide religious (Islamic) knowledge in the community. In addition, Christian higher education presents at UKSW (Satya Wacana Christian University). Thus, both can symbolize religious diversity in the education space.

These two campuses also represent tolerance in Salatiga. Some activities have been carried out collaboratively, such as cooperation in women's and children's activities and students conducting research on each other at IAIN Salatiga and UKSW. However, if the narrative is presented with "positive" diction, it will be the same as the results of other studies. Seeing collaboration as a form of harmony and tolerance can be an incomplete space without exploring more profound facts.

In (higher) education, forms of competition cannot be denied. Both also do it in the form of contestation in academic and religious spaces. In the academic space, forms of contestation such as scientific work, student quality, and services are considered natural as an obligation of every university. With different ages, management, and other technicalities, they produce different rankings. In the ranking issued by Webometric, UKSW ranked 30th, and IAIN Salatiga ranked 205th.

On the other hand, as universities with Islamic and Christian names, both have a joint mission of spreading religion. UKSW carries this out by requiring lecturers and permanent staff to be Christian. For students, all religions are still allowed to enter. Apart from the campus environment, the mission of spreading Christianity is also carried out in the community with an economic approach. This approach is usually more often done to the lower middle class.

IAIN Salatiga also carries out the spread of Islam with the concept of da'wah. This campus has a da'wah faculty. The purpose of da'wah activities is to deepen religious understanding. However, eventually, non-Muslims become interested in Islam and then decide to convert to Islam. The strategy of da'wah by IAIN Salatiga does not use an economic approach like UKSW but rather a religious approach.

At this point, the space for religious freedom does not limit the spread of religion as long as it is not coercive and violent. Finally, the data narrated above demonstrates three categories: families that respect religious differences, the behavior of restrictions on religious differences in accessing property rights, and the contestation of religious propagation by universities as religious expression.

### **Salatiga Tolerant or Religiously Free? A Human Rights Analysis**

The public has widely recognized Salatiga's "tagline" as a tolerant city. Coupled with the SETARA Institute's research, it has made Salatiga "legally" tolerant. The award is quite essential for one thing; it can give the city an image of harmony. The socio-religious life in Salatiga is indeed more colorful with religious diversity. With such diversity, it would be wonderful if the discussion and analysis did not stop at the context of tolerance. This section will give a new color to the study of Salatiga by bringing it into the concept of religious freedom.

The narrative in the previous section is enough to explain the dynamics of religious freedom in Salatiga. Pulling that into the religious freedom space will take us to analyze more thoroughly. Bielefeldt's concept is one of the instruments from the UDHR, ICCPR, and constitutional instruments. However, before that, the depth can start from the philosophical space of freedom from Tibor R. Machan. His perspective on freedom also touches on religion. Machan tries to offer a different take on religious freedom. While many people see Christmas as a time when there should not be much consumption, for him, consumption activities can improve the economy. He prefers to express Christmas as joy (Machan, 2006).

At first glance, his perspective targets the wider community, although his writing has the central thought, "At Christmas, do not bother me." The disturbance can arise due to emotional, economic, and other factors. When Christmas is drawn into the reality in Salatiga, it is almost always from Islamic groups such as Banser guarding the church area. In addition to the reality of joy, as Machan said, Salatiga "looks peaceful" at Christmas by

being guarded. If Machan describes the disturbance of others who forbid the joy of Christmas, guarding the Church at Christmas also shows a symbol of disturbance. The guarded church shows that there is a threat of disturbance from outside.

Disruption and threats are one form of tolerance inhibitor. In the context of power, tolerance can be seen as the willingness of people or parties with power to abandon their power when building relationships with those without power (Suhadi, 2018). Contextualizing tolerance in Salatiga with power can be seen when interfaith marriages take place. Law No. 1/1974 Chapter 2, paragraph 1, explains that a valid marriage is in accordance with the laws of each religion. It means that a religious understanding that does not allow interfaith marriage is not valid according to the state (Yannor, 2019). The power to tolerate, in this sense, belongs to both the state and religion. However, in the context of family planning, believing in a partner of the same religion can be an internal right in religion.

Family planning is a form of mixing human rights and religious behavior. Therefore, it is wrong when the argument arises that the adherents of freedom of religion want to be free. The more important is to base religious freedom on an advocacy space based on the Constitution and laws (Bagir, 2014). Thus, seeing Salatiga's tolerance within the framework of freedom of religion will drag the state's role into the space of social reality.

The three issues in the previous section of interfaith families, socio-religious realities, and proselytization contestation are community dynamics that the state needs to adequately address (Salatiga City Government). In SETARA Institute's explanation, there are indicators of government regulation in realizing tolerance, one of which is in the RPJMD and regional development work plan (RKPD – *Rencana Kerja Pembangunan Daerah*). Salatiga City's RKPD does not even have a specific work program on religious life, let alone tolerance and freedom of religion or belief.

In the RKPD, the diction of religion and tolerance appears only once in explaining the slogan "Salatiga Kota Beriman." Salatiga City Government seeks to realize the people of Salatiga as individuals who believe in God



Almighty in their respective religions. The municipal government's role as the most tolerant city has yet to protect the KBB. If a narrative of hatred and violence emerges during religious dissemination activities, the City Government must be present to protect them equally.

One of the principles of KBB is equality, which applies to humans, not their religion. This principle does not see equality in religion because diversity is so complex that there is no reference point for a clash of claims. Thus, the focus of freedom of religion is not on religious understanding but on protecting and guaranteeing the religious rights of every individual (Bielefeldt & Wiener, 2021). Hence, the expected role of the state is to refrain from intervening in interpreting religious understanding.

The religion and religious rights restrictions in Salatiga became less apparent when the viral phenomenon of the IAIN Salatiga choir singing in the church. They were present during a worship ceremony at the Javanese Christian Church (GKJ) Sidomukti (Susanto, 2018). At that time, there were many debates, one of which was from a group of IAIN Salatiga academics. The religious interpretation space was (somewhat) "forced" for the choir students. Singing in a church and being a Muslim are rights in different spaces. Thus, although academics are not a form of state representation, the omission of the state can be a form of state neglect in realizing freedom of religion and belief.

The conflict that emerged in Salatiga does not necessarily eliminate the results of SETARA Institute's research. One of the reasons is that it uses different methods (not quantitative). However, at least this study provides a different narrative. Restrictions on the two significant campuses of IAIN Salatiga and UKSW are still present. (While it is known), UKSW tends to be more open to accepting Muslims (except lecturers), and IAIN Salatiga is still not opening the gate for Christians. At this point, the difference between forum *internum* and *externum* becomes vital in the interpretation. Freedom to act has a reasonably clear boundary between the self and the public (Ahmad, 2016). When not providing a "gate" to those of different religions in accessing higher education, it is equivalent to providing a mandatory

requirement to choose a particular religion to get the right to education. This form of differentiated regulation can be a role model that illustrates whether or not Salatiga City is tolerant. Once again, such tolerance can be the cultural basis for implementing freedom of religion.

The concept of freedom is emphasized for post-reform freedom of religion or beliefs. Nevertheless, the harmony paradigm used during the New Order era has remained. In fact, both live together, where harmony becomes closer to public order (Bagir et al., 2021). Freedom by emphasizing the state's role in the family space, (higher) education, and socio-religious reality will form harmony and public order when the friction can be accommodated. With the capital of the most tolerant city, it could be started by Salatiga City Government.

Ultimately, the intersection of GBV and tolerance can be implemented by returning to the religious teachings of the people of Salatiga (Islam-Christian). Religious people must practice the teachings of their religion well. It is a follow-up to God's promise of universal salvation. Then, the promise is reinforced without baseless and empty speculation (Abdullah, 2018). An ideal of universal peace needs to be considered. In the context of Salatiga, which is (already) known to be tolerant, it can continue by bringing in the state to emphasize freedom of religion further. Improved behavior of respect for religious differences can become the foundation and cultural base to get closer to the culmination of freedom of religion and belief.

## Conclusion

By looking at government and social regulations, government actions, and demographics using a survey approach, SETARA Institute indicators still did not fully describe the reality of tolerance. Friction (slight) but in relatively large numbers will lead to threats to religious freedom. To conclude this paper, at least three things become evident. First, tolerance in Salatiga has been longstanding because of the ethnic and religious diversity and mutual respect. It is essential to realize the future of religious freedom. Second, friction and conflict based on religion will disrupt the

implementation of freedom of religion if the state cannot be present. Third, the state's (city government's) efforts can begin by restoring the pure religious teachings on harmony. It will be easier to implement in Salatiga, which already has a strong foundation of tolerance.[w]

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