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RESOLVING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION CASES IN ACEH, INDONESIA: Position and Role of Ulama

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Abstract: This study aimed to examine the position and role of Ulama in resolving human rights violation cases by the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). It analyzed the ulama representations within the Aceh TRC commissioners, their role in reconciliation, and factors that influence the role of the ulama. Data were obtained through interviews and documentation and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The results showed that the ulama's role was dismissed in cases of human rights violations. TRC's commissioners did not represent Ulama or play a significant role in the reconciliation process. Their diminished role in conflict resolution relates to delegitimization in Aceh. It occurred due to the scarcity of qualified ulama to solve the conflict and friction or polarization among them. Other causes were the ulama's lack of attention to human rights issues and the emergence of new actors that took over their conflict resolution roles. Ulama in Aceh could reaffirm its role in conflict resolution by restoring its legitimacy. They must improve their quality and formation based on day ah, strengthen their unity, avoid friction and polarization, and maintain neutrality. Ulama should also increase their involvement in conflict resolution and human rights issues.

Keywords: Ulama, Violation, Case Resolution, Human Rights, Aceh Reconciliation.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji posisi dan peran ulama dalam penyelesaian kasus pelanggaran HAM yang dilakukan Komisi Kebenaran dan Rekonsiliasi (TRC) Aceh. Laporan ini menganalisis keterwakilan ulama di komisioner KKR Aceh, peran mereka dalam rekonsiliasi, dan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi peran ulama. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peran ulama dalam rekonsiliasi kasus pelanggaran HAM yang dilakukan KKR Aceh diabaikan. Ulama tidak diwakili oleh komisioner KKR dan tidak berperan penting dalam proses rekonsiliasi. Berkurangnya peran mereka dalam resolusi konflik berkaitan dengan delegitimasi di Aceh. Hal ini terjadi karena kurangnya ulama yang mumpuni dalam menyelesaikan konflik Aceh serta adanya gesekan atau polarisasi di antara mereka. Penyebab lainnya adalah kurangnya perhatian ulama terhadap isu HAM dan munculnya aktor-aktor baru yang mengambil alih peran penyelesaian

konflik. Ulama di Aceh dapat menegaskan kembali perannya dalam penyelesaian konflik dengan memulihkan legitimasinya. Mereka harus meningkatkan kualitas dan formasi yang berbasis dayah, memperkuat persatuan, menghindari gesekan dan polarisasi, serta menjaga netralitas. Ulama juga harus meningkatkan keterlibatannya dalam penyelesaian konflik dan isu hak asasi manusia.

Kata Kunci: Ulama, Pelanggaran, Penyelesaian Kasus, Hak Asasi Manusia, Rekonsiliasi Aceh.

Introduction

Religious leaders in various countries are predominant in settling human rights violation cases. 1 According to Michael Battle, the resolution of such issues in South Africa after the Apartheid regime was contributed by Desmond Mpilo Tutu, former Archbishop and chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.² Similar occurrences ensued in other countries. Jeffrey Haynes showed the role of religious leaders in Mozambique, Nigeria, and Cambodia.3 Furthermore, Neira Omerovic explained the role of religious leaders in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴ Suprapto described the efforts of Islamic religious leaders (tuan guru) and Hindu religious leaders (pedanda) to create and maintain peace in Lombok, Indonesia.5

Sheila W. Chamburuka and Ernest van Eck also showed the role of religious leaders in Zimbabwe.⁶ According to Christine Schliesser, S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, and Pauline Kollontai, religious leaders are more likely to be involved in conflict resolution.⁷

The involvement of ulama in resolving cases of human rights violations is also a policy in Aceh. Aceh Qanun Number 17 of 2013, the basis for forming the Aceh TRC, stipulates Islamic principles as the first regulation. The principles contain the meaning and consequences of Islamic teachings guiding the resolution of human rights violation cases. According to Schliesser, religious teachings should involve religious leaders as peace agents. ⁸

Mukharrom, Tamyiz, and Supriyanto Abdi. "Harmonizing Islam and Human Rights Through the Reconstruction of Classical Islamic Tradition." *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 7.1 (2023): 40-57.

Michael Battle, "A Theology Of Community: The Ubuntu Theology Of Desmond Tutu," Interpretation: A Journal Of Bible And Theology 54, No.2 (2000), P.173-182; Megan Shore, Religion And Conflict Resolution: Christianity And South Africa's Truth And Reconciliation Commission, Religion And Conflict Resolution: Christianity And South Africa's Truth And Reconciliation Commission, (London: Routledge, 2013)

³ Jeffrey Haynes, "Conflict, Conflict Resolution, And Peace-Building: The Role Of Religion In Mozambique, Nigeria And Cambodia," *Commonwealth And Comparative Politics* 47, No.1 (2009), P.52-75

⁴ Neira Omerovic, "The Role Of Religious Leaders In Process of Reconciliation In Bosnia And Herzegovina: The Case of Bosnian Imams" (Istanbul: Ibnu Haldun University, 2017).

⁵ Suprapto, "Religious Leaders And Peace Building: The Roles Of Tuan Guru And Pedanda In Conflict Resolution In Lombok-Indonesia", *Al-Jami'ah*, 53, No.1 (2015), P.225-250.

Sheila W. Chamburuka And Ernest Van Eck, "Matthean Jesus And Forgiveness In Light Of National Healing, Peace And Reconciliation In Zimbabwe, 2008–2017," Hts Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies 75, No.3 (2019), P.1-10

⁷ Christine Schliesser, S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, And Pauline Kollontai, On The Significance Of Religion In Conflict And Conflict Resolution, On The Significance Of Religion In Conflict And Conflict Resolution, Ed. I, (London: Routledge, 2020)

⁸ Christine Schliesser, "Religion And Peace-Anatomy Of A Love-Hate Relationship," *Religions* 11, No.219 (2020), P.1-12

Several studies examined the ulama's role in conflict resolution in Aceh. Muhammad Sahlan et al. examined their role in the postconflict reconciliation process.9 However; the study did not mention ulama's capacity in the reconciliation conducted by TRC. 10 M. Fajri Kasim and Abidin Nurdin examined conflict resolution based on local wisdom. The study discussed the role of traditional institutions in Aceh. Still, it did not examine the role of the ulama and commissions. 11 Fahadayna also analyzed the religious influence on postconflict development in Aceh but did not discuss the settlement of human rights violation cases. 12 Meanwhile, Dian Andi Nur Aziz et al. analyze the need to align the substance of ganun with international human rights norms and assess the feasibility of implementing qanun without violating human rights.¹³

Therefore, this study aimed to examine the ulama's positions and roles in resolving human rights violation cases by the Aceh TRC.¹⁴ The discussion focused on the ulama's representation in the Aceh TRC and their role in the reconciliation process. Additionally, this study discussed the factors causing the commission to abandon ulama's role in resolving human rights violation cases. ¹⁵ The results are expected to help evaluate policies

for resolving human rights violations through reconciliation.

Method

This qualitative study used primary and secondary data on ulama's position and role in resolving human rights violation cases in the commission. The data were obtained by reviewing the Aceh Qanun No. 17 of 2013 concerning the Aceh TRC, Law No. 11 of 2006 the Government of concerning Aceh, documents of commissioner recruitment and the Aceh TRC Furthermore, supporting data was attained from mass media reports and interviews with the Aceh TRC commissioners. Data on factors causing the commission to abandon ulama's role in case resolution were obtained through interviews with respondents who understand problems. study's Additionally, supporting secondary data were obtained from relevant books, articles, and study reports. Data credibility was maintained by rechecking and comparing with other sources. The data collected were reduced, categorized, systematized, analyzed, and summarized into a conclusion.

⁹ Kasim, Fajri M., et al. "The Protection of Women and Children Post-Divorce in Sharia Courts in Aceh: A Sociological Perspective." *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 22.2 (2022): 411-432.

Muhammad Sahlan And Others, "The Roles Of Ulama In The Process Of Post-Conflict Reconciliation In Aceh," Society 7, No.2 (2019), P.251-267

Fajri M. Kasim And Abidin Nurdin, "Study Of Sociological Law On Conflict Resolution Through Adat In Aceh Community According To Islamic Law", Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam 4, No.2 (2020), P.375-397

Adhi Cahya Fahadayna, "The Implementations Of Islamic Law And Post-Conflict Development In Aceh, Northern Indonesia," Advances In Social

Science, Education And Humanities Research (Assehr)129, 2018, P.19-25

Dian Andi Nur Aziz Et Al., "Examining Qanun In Aceh From A Human Rights Perspective: Status, Substance And Impact On Vulnerable Groups And Minorities," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan* 23, No. 1 (2023): 37–56, Https://Ijtihad.Iainsalatiga.Ac.Id/Index.Php/Ijtih ad/Article/View/8837/Pdf.

Barkah, Qodariah, et al. "Abandonment of Women's Rights in Child Marriage; An Islamic Law Perspective." AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial 17.2 (2022): 383-411.

¹⁵ Aziz, Dian Andi Nur, et al. "Examining Qanun in Aceh from a human rights perspective: status, substance and impact on vulnerable groups and minorities." *Ijtihad J. Wacana Huk. Islam dan Kemanus* 23.1 (2023): 37-56.

Result and Discussion

Ulama and Their Urgency in Conflict Resolution

The term ulama comes from the Arabic 'ulamā` (العلماء), a plural for 'ālim (عالم), meaning the people owning the knowledge. The main characteristic of ulama is scientific capacity, specifically religious understanding. However, religious and scientific capacity is not the only criterion for ulama. According to Sayyid Quṭub, the ulama contemplates the people's benefit and understands the Al-Qur'an. 17

Yusni Saby grouped ulama in Aceh into ulama dayah and ulama outside dayah, a traditional Islamic school similar to a pesantren in Java.¹⁸ In dayah, students are taught religious knowledge from classical books called the turats or kitab kuning. Therefore, dayah scholars are called malem kitab, meaning they have religious knowledge based on turats.19 Ulama outside dayah is called malem sikola, meaning they have religious knowledge from formal education.²⁰ This includes Religious Teacher Education (PGA), Madrasah 'Aliyah (MA), and Islamic Higher Education (PTAI).21 They are also better known as Muslim scholars. In Aceh, the term ulama is more directed to those owning or leading dayah. 22

Yusni Saby found that *day, the ulama had real* social awareness and faithful religious commitment and were respected because they led the community's spiritual life. They are very reliable in Aceh because most Acehnese live in rural areas. Furthermore, ulama are respected because they are not directly involved in political and business affairs. Involvement in political activities, specifically with the ruling party, degrades their reputation. ²³

Aceh Qanun Number 2 of 2009 adopted the categorization of Aceh ulama concerning the Ulema Consultative Council (MPU). Article 1 Number 10 stipulates that the Aceh MPU is an assembly of Muslim scholars and ulama. They are working partners of the Aceh and the Government Aceh People's Representative Council (DPRA). Article 1 Number 12 stipulates that ulama are society's role models with moral integrity and deeply understand and practice Islamic teachings from the Qur'an and Hadith. Moreover, Article 1 number 13 stipulates that Muslim scholars are scientists with ethical integrity and expertise and practice Islamic teachings. According Deputy Chairman to Muhibbuththabary, all MPU Aceh members are ulama. However, the term 'ulama' is more directed to those owning or leading dayah. Muslim scientists outside this criterion are

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Ithnin, Norazam Khair Mohd, Ishak Suliaman, and Abdul Halim Ibrahim. "Violence against Women: Comparing Female Genital Mutilation and Female Circumcision in Malaysia." JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah) 22.2 (2023): 291-304.

Sayyid Qutub, Fī Dzilāl Al-Qur'ān, Juz V, (Beirūt: Ihyā' Al-Turats Al-'Araby, 1967), P.698

¹⁸ Umami, U., and A. Ghofur. "Human Rights in Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah al-Āmmah: A Perspective of Ibn 'Āshūr. Al-Ahkam, 32 (1), 87–108." (2022).

¹⁹ Ali, Zezen Zainul. "The Urgency of Patriotism in Maintaining the Unity in the Republic of

Indonesia in the Perspective of Maslahah." *Historia* 1.1 (2017): 13.

Ostrovsky, Sergey, et al. "Legal Regulation of Access to Justice During Wartime in Cases Related to The Protection of The Rights, Freedoms And Interests of Military Personnel And Conscripts." *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum dan Pemikiran* 23.2 (2023): 107-119.

Yusny Saby, "Islam And Social Change: The Role Of The 'Ulama' In Acehnese Society," *Proquest Dissertations And Theses* (1995)

²² Sahlan Et Al., "The Roles Of Ulama, P.251-267

²³ Yusny Saby, "Islam And Social Change.

grouped into scholars, though they have studied at *day*. ²⁴

Ulama has a crucial position and role in the life of the Aceh people. Jon Paisal showed that Aceh ulama contributed to public education, religious teachings, spreading customs and culture, fighting against colonialists, resolving conflicts, and realizing and maintaining peace.25 According to Kamaruzzaman Bustamam Ahmad and M.H. Aminruddin, ulama has legitimacy and through traditional credibility authority. charismatic This charismatic authority gives them great potential in managing and developing the community's social life, including realizing post-conflict reconciliation in Aceh. 26

With their legitimacy, credibility, and authority, Aceh ulama plays a crucial role in resolving conflicts in Aceh. Muhammad Sahlan et al. identified four roles of ulama in reconciliation. First, they provide knowledge and understanding about conflict prevention and resolution according to Islamic law. Second, ulama is a legal decision based on Sharia law, specifically in the reconciliation process. Third, they are mediators for conflicting parties. Fourth, the ulama guides ceremonial rituals when the parties agree to reconcile. ²⁷

Ulama Representation at Aceh TRC

Law Number 11 of 2006 concerning the Government of Aceh provides two settlement schemes. The first is through the establishment of a Human Rights Court in Aceh. This scheme is intended for cases arising after enacting Article 228 of Law

Number 11 of 2006. The second is establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Aceh. This scheme is aimed at cases before enacting Article 229 of Law Number 11 of 2006. The Aceh Government formed the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Aceh TRC) based on Aceh Qanun Number 17 of 2013 to implement the second scheme.

Article 3 of Aceh Qanun Number 17 of 2013 stipulates three objectives for establishing the Aceh TRC. The first is strengthening peace by revealing past human rights violations. The second is to help reconcile the perpetrators of human rights violations, all individuals, institutions, and victims. The third is to recommend comprehensive reparations for victims of human rights violations under universal standards regarding victims' rights.²⁸

The Aceh TRC members comprise seven commissioners selected and appointed to exercise their authority and duties. Since its establishment in 2016, the Aceh TRC has experienced the 2016-2021 and 2021-2026 leadership periods. In the first period, seven commissioners were elected, including Afridal Darmi (Chairman), Muhammad MTA (Vice Chair), Evi Narti Zain, Ainal Mardiah, Fuadi Abdullah, Masthur Yahya, and Fajran Zain (Members). Muhammad MTA resigned at the end of 2017 and was replaced by Muhammad Daud Berueh in 2018. Fajran Zain also resigned at the end of 2018 without a successor. After Fuadi Abdullam passed away on 21 September 2020, the remaining commissioners until the end of the period were Afridal Darmi (Chairman), Evi Narti Zein (Vice Chair), and three members,

Interview Dengan Muhibbuththabary, Wakil Ketua Mpu-Aceh, 2 Juli 2022

Paisal, "Peran Ulama Dalam Masyarakat Aceh Dari Masa Kemasa", Society 7, No.2 (2019), P.251-267.

²⁶ Kamaruzzaman Bustamam Ahmad Dan M.H. Aminruddin, *Ulama, Separatisme, Dan Radikalisme Di Aceh*, (Yogyakarta: Kaukaba, 2013)

²⁷ Sahlan Et Al., "The Roles Of Ulama, P.251-267

Fadil, Fadil, Zidna Mazidah, and Zaenul Mahmudi. "Fulfillment of Women's Rights After Divorce: Dynamics and Transformation in the Legal Journey." *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum dan Syar'iah* 16.1 (2024): 1-20.

including Master Yahya, Ainal Mardiah, and Muhamad David Berueh. ²⁹

The first-term commissioners came from educational occupational various and **TRC** backgrounds. Three Aceh commissioners for the 2016-2021 period were religious graduates. There were also three law, one economics, and one agricultural graduate. Many commissioners with religious education backgrounds were accommodated, but none represented ulama. The track records of the three commissioners with Islamic university education backgrounds are social and human rights activists, politicians, and academics.

Seven commissioners were elected and appointed in the 2021-2026 period, including Masthur Yahya (chairman), Oni Imelva (vice-Bustami, chairman), Safriandi, Medelina, Tasrizal, and Yuliati. They also from various educational and came backgrounds. Regarding occupational educational background, four commissioners of the Aceh TRC for the 2021-2026 period were religious scholars. There was one law, engineering, and one English graduate each. Therefore, the commission was dominated by religious scholars, but none represented ulama. The backgrounds of their activities are journalists, NGO activists, advocates, and Aceh TRC staff. 30

Ulama's status is determined by their educational background, commitment to religious teachings, personality, integrity,

nobility, dedication, and intensive attention to people's welfare. These aspects could be observed from a person's track record and activities. In Aceh, the ulama is a religious scientist based on and leading data.³¹ Given these characteristics, no commissioner of the Aceh TRC qualified to represent ulama in the first and second periods.

Implementing Islamic principles at the Aceh TRC places Islamic teachings in an essential and strategic position. However, it has not maximized ulama's involvement in resolving human rights violation cases. According to Schliesser, religious teachings must involve religious leaders as peace agents due to their capacity and authority in interpreting and implementing religious teachings. Also, the ulama's presence is required to ensure that religious resources are utilized optimally to support conflict resolution and create tranquility. ³²

The Role of Ulama in the Reconciliation Process

One duty of the Aceh TRC is to reconcile the conflicting parties in Aceh. Article 20 Number 1 of Aceh Qanun Number 17 of 2013 stipulates that reconciliation uses Aceh's customary mechanisms. ³³Aceh's customary mechanisms allow ulama to participate in the reconciliation process. ³⁴This is due to the close relationship between traditions and religion. ³⁵ Ulama have positions within Aceh's customs that will enable their

²⁹ Kkr Aceh, Laporan Perkembangan Kerja (Kinerja) Komisi Kebenaran Dan Rekonsiliasi Aceh Periode 2016-2021 "Pemulihan Hak Korban Adalah Kewajiban Pemerintah", Kkr Aceh (Banda Aceh, November 2021) [Accessed 4 June 2022].

³⁰ Kkr Aceh, "Komisioner Kkr," Kkr Aceh, 2020.

³¹ Interview With Muhibbuththabary, 2 July 2022

³² Christine Schliesser, "Religion And Peace-Anatomy, P.1-12

Mumtazinur, Mumtazinur, and Yenny Sri Wahyuni. "Keamanan Individu (Personal Security) dan Qanun Hukum Keluarga: Tinjauan Konsep

Keamanan Manusia (Human Security)." *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 4.1 (2021): 76-89.

Arskal Salim, "Adat And Islamic Law In Contemporary Aceh, Indonesia: Unequal Coexistence And Asymmetric Contestation," Samarah 5, No. 2 (2021)

Khalsiah Et Al., "An Analysis Of Culture Value In Adat Bak Poe Teumeureuhom, Hukom Bak Syiah Kuala, Qanun Bak Putro Phang, Reusam Bak Binatara," *Indian Journal Of Public Health Research And Development* 9, No. 12 (2018)

involvement in the reconciliation process. ³⁶ Aceh's traditional institutions have an *imeum meunasah* (mosque priest) representing ulama. *Imeum meunasah* is authorized to lead the Gampong community's religious activities, including sharia enforcement. ³⁷ According to Article 23 Letter d of Aceh Qanun Number 10 of 2008 concerning Customary Institutions, mum meunasah resolves community disputes with customary stakeholders.

Since its formation in 2016, Aceh TRC has facilitated various reconciliations, such as the Bener Meriah Regency. The reconciliation began with the commission preparing a mechanism in collaboration with civil society organizations and multiple experts. Academics in customary law and the Chair of the Aceh Customary Council discussed a reconciliation model based on Aceh's customs and local wisdom. At the prereconciliation stage, traditional leaders, the Aceh Customary Council administrators, were prepared as candidates for assistant mediators. The commission held an informal meeting with the parties involved in the conflict to socialize the process. reconciliation facilitated by the commission received a positive response from the parties. When the parties are willing to reconcile, the commissioner proceeds to the mediation stage to build an understanding between the perpetrator and the victim. 38

The Aceh TRC involved local traditional leaders and ulama in making reconciliation a broader and rooted issue. The commission collaborated with *Dayah* Ulama to provide spiritual support to victims. They also asked for an assessment of Aceh ulama based on

Islamic law on non-judicial conflict resolution through reconciliation. For this purpose, the commission initiated the Aceh Ulama Muzakarah, attended by Dayah ulama, with the reconciliation theme from an Islamic perspective, on December 17-18, 2020. ³⁹ Dayah Ulama has compiled and submitted comprehensive input to the commission through a special team formed. This input was incorporated into the reconciliation concept by the Aceh TRC. ⁴⁰

The description of the reconciliation process shows the ulama's three roles. First, they witness the mediation conducted in villages sub-districts through customary and mechanisms. The Wali Nagroe or their representatives witness reconciliation at the district, city, and provincial levels. Second, the ulama provides moral and spiritual support to the reconciliation parties. Third, they give the results of examining the legality of Islamic law in the reconciliation process. These three functions show that the ulama supports and complements reconciliation process. Under Articles 34 and 36 of Aceh Qanun Number 17 of 2013, the leading actor in the reconciliation is the Aceh TRC commissioner. The presence of ulama through the Aceh Customary Institution only the implementation strengthens reconciliation.

The role of the Aceh ulama in reconciliation has been insignificant compared to that of religious leaders in other countries, such as South Africa. Desmond Tutu, the former Archbishop, immediately acted as President

³⁶ Kamaruddin Kamaruddin, "Model Penyelesaian Konflik Di Lembaga Adat," Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan, 2013

Abidin Nurdin Et Al., "The Implementation Of Meunasah-Based Sharia In Aceh: A Social Capital And Islamic Law Perspective," Samarah 5, No. 2 (2021)

³⁸ Kkr Aceh, Laporan Perkembangan Kerja".

³⁹ Kkr Aceh, Ibid.

Kkr Aceh, "Laporan Akuntabilitas Kerja Komisi Kebenaran Dan Rekonsiliasi (Kkr) Aceh Tahun 2020 'Mengungkap Kebenaran Di Tengah Pandemi," *Kkr Aceh* (Banda Aceh, 2021), Https://Kkr.Acehprov.Go.Id/Media/2021.04/Laporan_Akuntabilitas_Kkr_Aceh_2020.Pdf.

of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa.⁴¹
⁴² Religious leaders are also involved in the institutional process of resolving human rights violation cases in the Balkans and the Great Lakes region of Africa, ⁴³ Sudan⁴⁴ and South Sudan, ⁴⁵ Mozambique, Nigeria, Cambodia, ⁴⁶ Bosnia-Herzegovina, ⁴⁷ and Zimbabwe. ⁴⁸

The absence of ulama among the commissioners and their lack of involvement in the reconciliation process was a loss for the Aceh TRC. According to Kadayifci-Orellana, religious leaders offer legitimacy credibility in conflict resolution. 49 Therefore, the absence of the ulama caused the Aceh TRC to lack legitimacy and authority before the conflicting parties. The commissioners themselves perceive this. They sometimes feel less confident when dealing with parties to reconcile, particularly from the Indonesian National Army (TNI) or members of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) that significantly control the Aceh government.⁵⁰ 51 52 53 54

The absence of ulama also caused the Aceh TRC to lose the opportunity to get reliable peace actors. According to Haynes and

Schliesser, religious leaders are the most appropriate actors for conflict resolution and peace establishment. 55 Kadayifci-Orellana added that religious leaders are good because thev mediators know understand the conflicting parties well. They make the parties aware of the importance of developing love, peace, forgiveness, and healing from inner wounds, ⁵⁶ as realized by the Aceh ulema. Muhibbuththabary, Deputy Chairman of the MPU Aceh, felt Aceh TRC's performance was less than optimal. This is partly due to the absence of highly authoritative community leaders in this commission. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the involvement of the ulama as leaders of the Aceh TRC. 57

Causing Factors of Ulama's Disregarded Role in Conflict Resolution in Aceh

Ulama's role is being disregarded in conflict resolution in Aceh due to at least four factors. The first factor is the scarcity of qualified ulama figures in Aceh. In the past, the ulama had an important position and role in almost all aspects of life in Aceh's historic stage. During the Aceh Sultanate, the ulama held

- ⁴¹ P G J Meiring, "Truth And Reconciliation In South Africa: The Role Of The Faith Communities," Verbum Et Ecclesia 26, No. 1 (2005), P.146-173
- ⁴² Tracy Riggle, "Desmond Tutu: A Theological Model For Justice In The Context Of Apartheid," Denison Journal Of Religion 7, No. 1 (June 2017), P.21-32
- Mohammed Abu-Nimer And S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, "Muslim Peace-Building Actors In Africa And The Balkan Context: Challenges And Needs," Peace & Change, 2008, P. 549-581
- ⁴⁴ Jacqueline H Wilson, "Blood Money In Sudan And Beyond: Restorative Justice Or Face-Saving Measure?," Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities And Social Sciences, 2015
- Matthias Basedau And Carlo Koos, "When Do Religious Leaders Support Faith-Based Violence? Evidence From A Survey Poll In South Sudan," Political Research Quarterly 68, No. 4 (2015), P.760-772.
- 46 Haynes, "Conflict, Conflict Resolution And Peace-Building, P. 52-

- ⁴⁷ Neira Omerovic, "The Role Of Religious Leaders
- ⁴⁸ Chamburuka And Van Eck, "Matthean Jesus And Forgiveness In Light Of National Healing, Peace And Reconciliation In Zimbabwe, 2008–2017."
- ⁴⁹ Kadayifci-Orellana, "Ethno-Religious Conflicts: Exploring The Role Of Religion In Conflict Resolution," In *The Sage Handbook Of Conflict Resolution*, 2009.
- Oni Imelva, Wakil Ketua Kkr Aceh, Interview On 21 Mart 2022
- 51 Bustami, Komisioner Kkr Aceh, Interview On 21 Mart 2022
- Tasrizal, Komisioner Kkr Aceh, Interview On 21 Mart 2022
- 53 Sharli Meidelina, Komisioner Kkr Aceh, Interview On 21 Mart 2022
- Yuliati, Komisioner Kkr Aceh, Interview On 21 Mart 2022
- Haynes, "Conflict, Conflict Resolution And Peace-Building, P.52-75
- ⁵⁶ Kadayifci-Orellana, "Ethno-Religious Conflicts.
- ⁵⁷ Muhibbuththabary, Interview On 2 July 2022

high positions. They served as advisors to the as Hamzah sultan. such al-Fansuri, Syamsuddin al-Sumatrani, Nuruddin al-Raniri, Shaykh Abdurrauf al-Singkili, Jalaluddin al-Tursani, Shaykh Muhammad Zain, and Shaykh Abdullah al-Asyi. Others included Shaykh Jamaluddin bin Abdullah al-Asyi, Shaykh Muhammad bin Ahmad Khatib, Shaykh Abbas al-Asyi, and Shaykh Daud Ismail. During the Dutch colonial period, ulama led the battle against the invaders, such as Shaykh Muhammad Saman Ditiro, Tengku Muhammad, Tengku Haji Cut Maheng, Tengku Chik Kuta Karang, Tengku Chik Kulu, Tengku Chik Dimata'i, Tengku Cot Plieng, and Tengku Dibarat. 58 The presence of great ulama with large capacities has become increasingly rare.

Irwan Abdullah, a sociologist-anthropologist from Aceh, stated that fewer scholars have participated in solving Aceh society's problems. The prolonged conflict, tsunami disaster, and the lack of regeneration influence this situation. Also, there is polarization within the ulama's internal circles. From the outside, Aceh Ulama appears united, but not from the inside. Education in Aceh should have a peaceful Islamic curriculum design to overcome this condition. The Acehnese must revive their cultural Islam from Menasha Day after being involved in political Islam since 1973. ⁵⁹

The second factor is friction and internal conflict among the ulama. According to Irwan Abdullah, ulama's role in Aceh society is degraded by polarization and friction. This friction and conflict originated from the

dynamics between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Government of Indonesia. The protracted conflict puts the ulama in a challenging and dilemmatic position. Under their historical-cultural position, the ulama must mediate disputes and establish peace. However, various interests and circumstances dragged them into the conflict. Barter found that Aceh Ulama was fragmented in its response to the separatists. Group or personal interests drive some ulama to support one conflicting party, even when others remain neutral. ⁶⁰

The ulama needed to present and maintain neutrality as their ideal position. Aslam Nur showed that ulama does not want to be trapped in conflict, but their position requires them to play a role in resolving disputes. Mistakes in attitude and steps have fatal consequences because the two warring parties could suspect the position of the ulama side. 61 Aminuddin Al-Rahab further explained this Dilemma. When the central government initiated a dialogue using the ulama as a mediator, GAM suspected that the ulama was not neutral. As intermediaries, the ulama were considered government mouthpieces to achieve their goals. This negative view is reasonable because some ulama displays suspicious behavior. They the Indonesian national headquarters close to the central government. The ulama did not distance themselves from the rulers and lost the trust of the opposing parties. Referring to Tim Kell, Aminuddin al-Rahab considered them as collaborating scholars. 62

Abd. Wahid, "Pola Peran Ulama Dalamn Negara di Aceh," Madania: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman 17, No. 1 (2020), P.85-92

⁵⁹ Irwan Abdullah, Sosiolog-Antropolog Asal Aceh, Interview On 29 July 2022; Serambinews.Com, "Peran Ulama Aceh Semakin Berkurang - Serambi Indonesia," 2014.

⁶⁰ Shane Joshua Barter, "Ulama, The State, & War: Community Islamic Leaders In The Aceh Conflict," Contemporary Islam 5, No. 1 (9 April 2011), P.19–36,

⁶¹ Aslam Nur, "Ulama Dalam Dinamika Sosial Dan Budaya Masyarakat Aceh Di Awal Abad Kedua Puluh Satu," Humaniora 23, No.3 (2011), 315-325

⁶² Aminuddin Al-Rahab, "Ulama, Dendam, Dan Kebenaran," Kontras, July 2019,

Ulama's polarization emerged in the form of institutions.63 According to Sahlan et al., various ulama organizations were formed with diverse political orientations and interests. They included the Aceh Dayah Ulama Association (HUDA), MPU, and the Aceh Nangroe Ulama Council (MUNA). Each organization claims to be a party that should be called an ulama. 64 The political affiliation of each institution exacerbates the polarization,65 negatively affecting ulama's sacredness and role. Therefore, the Aceh conflict caused ulama's individual and institutional polarization. 66

The friction and polarization experienced by Aceh Ulama compounded them to show and maintain neutrality. This questionable neutrality diminishes their social credibility and legitimacy. Their fairness to conflicting parties could be more convenient, making them less trustworthy as mediators and reconcilers. This condition degrades the role of Aceh ulama in conflict resolution since they have lost their quality as peace agents. According to Kadayfici-Orellana, the main qualities required of religious leaders in conflict resolution are high public legitimacy and credibility. 67

Loss of legitimacy and credibility due to involvement in conflicts such as those

experienced by Acehnese clerics also occurred in Nigeria. Sulaiman Sheu Adua found that the relationship between religious leaders and politicians that caused conflict and bloodshed in Nigeria made Muslim and Christian religious leaders lose legitimacy and credibility as peacemakers. 68 In this situation, ulama is no longer the solution to a conflict but the party that triggers and escalates the conflict. Freedman also found that the Jewish religious leaders' attitudes and rhetoric are responsive to the violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. 69

The third factor causing the degradation of the Aceh ulama's role in conflict resolution is their decreased attention to human rights issues. In this situation, ulama focuses more on education and da'wah. Aslam Nur found that ulama in Aceh society has degraded since the beginning of the 21st century. In the past, their role was significant in almost all aspects of Acehnese life or polyformic leadership. It has dwindled in the 21st century and is only seen in ceremonies, religious understanding, or monoformic leadership. 70 Subsequently, other life aspects, such as human rights, have received less attention from scholars.

Syamsul Rijal, a Muslim academic and intellectual, showed that human rights issues

Https://Kontras.Org/WpContent/Uploads/2019/07/AcehDikompresi.Pdf.

Januddin Muhammad Yusuf, Nawir Yuslem, And Dhiauddin Tanjung, "The Inclusion Of Ulema In The Aplication Of Islam Nusantara Law For The Aceh Community," *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum Dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan* 23, No. 2 (2023): 186–97, Https://Doi.Org/Https://Doi.Org/10.30631/Alrisalah.V23i2.1428.

Moch Nur Ichwan, "Official Ulema And The Politics Of Re-Islamization: The Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama, Sharatization And Contested Authority In Post-New Order Aceh," Journal Of Islamic Studies 22, No.2 (2011), P. 183-214

Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad, "Perpecahan Ulama Dan Ketahanan Ummat Islam Di Aceh," Academia. Edu, Accessed July 27, 2020, Https://Www.Academia. Edu/3359165/Perpecah

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⁶ Sahlan Et Al., "The Roles Of Ulama, P.251-267.

⁶⁷ Kadayifci-Orellana, Ethno-Religious Conflicts

Sulaiman Sheu Adua, "The Attitude Of Religious Leaders Towards Violence In Nigeria: Case Study Of Mosques And Churches," *International Journal Of Islamic Thought* 17, No. 1 (2020), P.101-110

Michael Freedman, "Fighting From The Pulpit: Religious Leaders And Violent Conflict In Israel," Journal Of Conflict Resolution 63, No.10 (2019), P.2262-2288

Nur; Aslam Nur And Sjafri Sairin, 'Ulama Dan Dinamika Sosial Masyarakat Aceh (Studi Tentang Peran Dan Posisi Ulama Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat Aceh Pada Awal Abad Kedua Puluh Satu)', Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2011 [Accessed 16 July 2020].

are not the domain of ulama among Acehnese but the domain of legal experts and human rights defenders. ⁷¹ Saifullah, academics, and other Muslim scholars also made a similar statement. ⁷² Additionally, the same view is developing within the MPU Aceh. Deputy Chairman Muhibbuththabary stated that MPU Aceh handed over the settlement of human rights violation cases to responsible experts and institutions, including the Aceh TRC. MPU Aceh contributes to providing ideas and guidance in resolving human rights violation cases in line with Islamic law. ⁷³

The fourth factor causing the degradation of the ulama's role in conflict resolution is the emergence of new actors replacing their role in the settlement. This factor relates to and is a consequence of the previous point. Ulama has avoided problems outside education and da'wah since the beginning of the 21st century. This has reduced their role in protecting the community's educational, economic, political, legal, and human rights interests during conflict and post-conflict times. As a result, the role of peace agents was taken over by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Aslam Nur found that various NGOs fought for and advocated for the Aceh people's interests during the conflict. Initially, they were more oriented toward the community's economic empowerment, while others were engaged in education. Some NGOs are concerned with human rights, democracy, and women's empowerment. Since the NGOs voiced the community's suffering, they gained the appreciation and attention of the Aceh people, specifically victims of violence. Their activities were also publicized and socialized, making them considered ready to protect the community's interests. Many Acehnese complain about their problems and fate to NGOs rather than other institutions well-established in the cultural system, such as the ulama. Therefore, the role of advocacy and protection of people's rights historically performed by ulama has slowly shifted to NGOs. Ulama still performs the roles of education, role models, and leadership. ⁷⁴

The degradation of the ulama's role in conflict resolution was noticeable when peace efforts they initiated and mediated in collaboration with civil figures failed. In 2005, some ulama from Islamic organizations expressed their readiness to facilitate the Aceh conflict resolution, a contribution welcomed by the Indonesian government. However, attempt failed because representatives of the Free Aceh Movement in the Joint Security Committee opposed the proposal to involve ulama. They saw that the Aceh problem was not a religious conflict and could be solved by ulama. 75 Furthermore, several agreements signed between the Free Aceh Movement and the government were initiated and mediated by International NGOs, not ulama. The Joint Understanding on Humanitarian Pause for Aceh on 12 May 2000 in Bavois, Geneva, was initiated and mediated by the Hendri Dunant Centre. After the 2004 Aceh tsunami, the negotiations between the two parties that resulted in the Helsinki MoU on 15 August 2005 were mediated by Marti Ahtisari, former President of Finland. This means the Free Aceh Movement and the government trust foreign NGOs more than the ulama and Acehnese civil figures. 76

Conclusion

This study found that ulama's role was disregarded in resolving human rights violation cases organized by the Aceh TRC, as

⁷¹ Syamsul Rijal, Cendikiawan Muslim Aceh, Interview On 29 June 2022

⁷² Saifullah, Cendikiawan Muslim Aceh, *Interview* On 29 June 2022

Muhibbuththabary, Wakil Ketua Mpu-Aceh, Interview On 2 July 2022

⁷⁴ Nur, "Ulama Dalam Dinamika Sosial.

⁷⁵ Liputan 6, "Ulama Siap Membantu Menyelesaikan Konflik Aceh," Liputan6.Com, May 2003.

Nur, "Ulama Dalam Dinamika Sosial Dan Budaya Masyarakat Aceh Di Awal Abad Kedua Puluh Satu."

demonstrated in two aspects. First, the ulama was not represented by Aceh TRC commissioners in the first (2016-2021) and the second (2021-2026) periods. Second, their role in the reconciliation process is insignificant. They only participate as witnesses and providers of moral-spiritual support and sharia legality fatwas.

The abandonment of the ulama's role in resolving human rights violation cases organized by the Aceh TRC differs from the global conflict resolution trend. Religious leaders are given a significant and strategic role in conflict resolution efforts in various countries. They serve as chairmen of truth and reconciliation commissions, such as Desmond Mpilo Tutu in South Africa. This neglect contradicts historical facts about the ulama's central role in the Aceh people's lives, including conflict resolution.

The abandonment relates the delegitimization experienced by the ulama in Aceh for several reasons. First, there is a need for more qualified scholars to solve the problems of the Aceh people. Second, there is friction and polarization among the ulama, causing their neutrality and credibility as mediators and peace agents to be questioned. Third, the ulama pays no attention to human rights issues. Fourth, their role in conflict resolution has been assumed by new actors, specifically NGO activists and academics in Aceh.

Ulama could reaffirm its position and role in resolving conflicts and realizing peace in Aceh by restoring and reinforcing its social legitimacy and credibility. They need to improve their quality and cadre based on data by utilizing modern science and technology. They should strengthen internal unity, avoid friction and polarization, and maintain neutrality. Additionally, ulama should focus on da'wah and education and increase their attention and involvement in

overcoming other social problems, including human rights issues.

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