

Political Dynamics of Fulfilling Civil Rights of Religious Minority Communities in Cilegon City

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ABSTRACT -This article focuses on discussing the polemic about the establishment Church in Cilegon which has never been resolved. Minority communities are hampered in realizing religious freedom. They are subjugated by cultural, social and political conditions and groups who firmly oppose the Church's presence in Cilegon. We use descriptive qualitative research methods which are useful for exploring the main problem in a holistic manner. The theory used is freedom and plurality by Hannah Arendt. This research show that the concept of plurality and freedom of worship for non-Muslim communities has not been fully implemented due to pressure from conservative groups. This illustrates that the condition of representation of living together is only limited to drinking coffee with Muslim. But, on the basic understanding that every human being as a unique person is entitled to a freedom. The political dynamics in Cilegon also look very conservative, the political elites have no sensitivity towards minority groups. They are completely reluctant to leave their comfort zone, because the elites in the city do not strive for justice for minorities. The practice of plurality and conditions of freedom of worship have not been fully realized in the current living conditions of Cilegon society.

Keywords: Civil Rights; Political Dynamic; Religious Minority; Plurality

Introduction

The fulfillment and guarantee of citizens rights in a unique multicultural society has not yet been properly actualized because plurality has not been fully accepted by society (Fathuddin, 2015; Hikmawan, 2017b; Indriyany, 2017; Kymlicka, 1995; Mahfud, 2022), and this phenomenon is certainly a problematic problem (Hikmawan, 2017b; Indriyany, 2017; Lumowa, 2022). Marshall in (Febrianti, 2017) stated that one of the basic rights of citizen membership is namely, civil rights that provide space and affirmation to each individual for their thoughts and beliefs. Space for belief is manifested in the form of freedom of religion and belief through “*forum internum* and *forum eksternum*” (Mulyana, 2001; Sinaga, 2012; Wahab, 2020).

Freedom of religion (Simanjuntak, 2022) in Hannah Arendt's thought, she proposed fundamental freedom for humans, to adhere to a particular religion and tolerance as a boundary protected by the state. Arendt in (Lehan, 2020; Pandor, 2013; Wibowo, 2023) states that freedom is a special actualization of human action which is represented through the space of appearance. However, in public representation minority groups are vulnerable to discrimination from the majority society (Marzuki & Fikri, 2022; Suparlan, 2004).

Actualization *freedom of religion* in the context of a multicultural society according by Gvosdev in (Maula, 2020) namely that the government has the legal freedom to curb religious freedom through “smuggling” regulations in the name of common interests. *Public policy* that are established often confine minority groups to hegemonic policies (Hikmawan, 2017b). Conditions of lameness in articulation and conveying the aspirations of citizens which have implications for a

condition of win-lose (*loser-winner gap*) which results in the fulfillment of basic rights of citizens not being fulfilled properly (Jati, 2022).

Looking at the Indonesian context, this is reinforced by the statement by the Fellowship of Indonesian Churches (PGI) which alludes to the Joint Regulations of the Minister of Religion and the Minister of Home Affairs Number 9 and 8 of 2006 which stipulate that, the establishment of a place of worship requires at least sixty signatures as a form of support from the local community, and a letter of recommendation from the local Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) (Peraturan Bersama Menteri Agama Dan Menteri Dalam Negeri, 2006). The existence of these rules is as mentioned in (Utama, 2019) that from 2015 to 2018 it was found that fifty-one church construction projects had failed due to the requirements of the FKUB recommendation letter. This phenomenon is clearly detrimental and suppresses the freedom of minority groups to be able to carry out his religious activities, because it is a policy product made by *policy maker* make a space for *majoritarian group* to exclude second class society (Hikmawan, 2017b).

Arendt characterizes freedom (Ansyah, 2009; Lehan, 2020; Yanti et al., 2019) as a condition that is free from coercion and violence, not bound by domination and intervention outside the group. The above phenomenon is certainly inversely proportional to the spirit of plurality proposed by Arendt, plurality is seen as a condition for action as a manifestation of freedom (Lehan, 2020; Pandor, 2013; Wibowo, 2023; Yanti et al., 2019). Plurality in (Fatih, 2016; Pandor, 2020) as part of the realization of similarities and differences in individual rights is manifested through space for gathering, association, behavior and coming together for the common good.

The phenomenon presented by PGI above states that the realization *freedom of religion* in the reality of a plural society has not been properly actualized. This is according to Gayatri Spivak in (Setiawan, 2018) because, second class society does not stop at the classification of oppressed groups (*minoritarian group*), but how to articulate interest's *secondary citizen* limited by the group that represents it. Spivak's perspective is reflected in several forms of violations of Freedom of Religion and Belief (KBB) which do not only occur in Indonesia such as rejection of plans to build a mosque in Daegu City, Daehyeon-dong, South Korea because *stereotype* muslim group as a terrorist. The resident's resistance was launched by roasting a pig at the location of the mosque construction project and placing three pig heads at the access to the mosque (Nariswari, 2022; Oktaviani & Nursalikhah, 2022).

Rejection of mosques also occurred in Bendigo, Australia (Hardoko, 2014; Masjiduna, 2019; Sasongko & Ucu, 2013) by distributing black balloons because they were deemed to have disturbed other more vital interests even though in the end the development project was approved. Another case occurred in Pakistan and was experienced by Pakistani Christian groups who often experienced insults and attacks in places of worship. These attacks occurred at the Quetta Church in December 2017, a suicide bomb explosion at the Peshawar Church in 2013, and a bomb explosion at the same church in March 2015, as well as the burning of a Christian church and school in Faisalabad in 2005 (AFP, 2018).

Bomb blasts also occurred at Santo Yohanes's Catholic Church and Yohanabad's Christ Church and claimed more than fifteen lives (PGI, 2015). The most recent case was the shooting of a young Christian named Azeem Gulzar because his family gave him a plot of land to build a church. Apart from that, Christian groups in Pakistan received death threats if they continued to build a church. Recorded on November 2019 (Lori, 2020) St. Dominikus Arifwala's Catholic Church, Punjab was attacked and destroyed and the church cross was taken. Some of these facts presented are of course inversely proportional to the spirit of tolerance which is actually backlashed because it

propagandizes “*culture differentiation*” rather than equality as universal human beings. (Lumowa, 2022). This phenomenon occurs as a result of marginal policies established by the government through these regulations which are unable to accommodate the interests of minority communities. Restrictions on the actualization of religious freedom constitute a violation of *forum eksternum* in the actualization of *freedom of religion* (Fathuddin, 2015; Novitasari, 2019; Sarawati, 2022).

According to the Setara Institute press release regarding the 2022 Tolerant City Index (IKT), Cilegon City is included in the intolerant city category with a low tolerance index of 3.227, making Cilegon City one of the top ten intolerant cities throughout 2022. The calculations are Cities with low tolerance are seen from eight main indicators, namely development planning, discriminatory regulations, violations of religious freedom, civil society movements, district/city government statements, government actions, religious plurality, and exclusivity of religious life.

The factor in refusing to establish a place of worship for non-Muslims in Cilegon is explained by the actions of Dutch colonialists in the past which were considered to have silenced the ulama and kiai, the presence of the Banten ulama's will aimed aims to prohibit the establishment of places of worship for Christians (Hardian, 2015; Riansyah et al., 2021). Another factor that is the basis for the rejection of the establishment of Christian community houses of worship is the construction of PT. Krakatau Steel, and Serang Regent's Decree No. 189/Huk/SK/1975 dated 20 March 1975 concerning the Closure of Churches or Christian Congregation Places within Serang Regency (1975) or Cilegon as a consequence of the “Village Bedol Movement” (Martin & Dani, 2023). According to Dodi (not his real name), this is still maintained by the “old” groups of Cilegon City, social life side by side with Chinese migrant communities, people from outside the region, and the existence of religious minorities outside Islam is considered a normal thing, but speaking The issue of religion is still avoided because of the Cilegon Geger incident (Alwan, 2022a) still continues to make an impression on the people of the “colonial” group of Cilegon City.

This phenomenon was then seen as a gap in efforts to fulfill the civil rights of non-Muslim communities, especially in Cilegon City. The state has firmly stated that the right to freedom of religion and belief is fully guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution Article 29 Paragraph 2 (Itsnaeni, 2021; Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia, 2021; Siringoringo, 2022; Wiratraman, 2007). Past historical factors related to Geger Cilegon which are still carried out at religious events such as recitations and tadarusan, according to Dodi (not his real name), this is an important point in the phenomenon of “silencing” discussions about religious plurality in Cilegon City, even though in reality the community's daily social life has long coexisted with non-Muslim communities. This is an interesting fact, the presence of the Catholic community as a unique group in the reality of a multicultural society (Hikmawan, 2017; Lehan, 2020) actually has been accepted for a long time. Catholic minority groups and Muslim majority communities can sit together and discuss social, cultural and economic contexts but avoid discussions related to Church development because they are still haunted by the trauma of past events. Parno's attitude towards the presence and existence of the church in the life of the people of Cilegon City is considered to be part of the spirit of Christianization like the framing of the existence of the Dutch East Indies, and the presence of a church in Cilegon City is given the illusion that it will repeat past events where ulama and religious figures were restrained and killed by Dutch colonialists.

The plurality that Arendt imagined as a condition for action and freedom in a heterogeneous society has not been actualized in the reality of a plural society in Cilegon. Shadows of past events that continue to be preserved, even echoed in religious activities, are still the main problem in realizing the existence of places of worship for Cilegon's Catholic minority group. Illustration related

to plurality especially in "colonial" societies that have not yet developed the realm of religious heterogeneity, this is a problem in itself for the struggle of the Cilegon Catholic community in seeking the construction of worship facilities.

Method

The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method. The use of qualitative research is useful for the research team in understanding, exploring, and uncovering certain phenomena from the research object. Qualitative research aims to get a holistic picture of a phenomenon from the subject's point of view (Tobing, 2017). Then this type of research is considered capable of providing answers the descriptive data in various forms ranging from written things, verbal expressions to the actions or activities of the person or group being studied. Then the data collection techniques that the team used were observation, interviews and literature study. Next, the data obtained from primary and secondary sources is carried out by a classification process which we call "coding" in order to organize the unstructured data puzzle into a structure, sequence, and systematic. Finally, we attempted a holistic analysis by compiling the data puzzle with theoretical and empirical perspectives carefully and carefully in order to "*discover the nature of the specific events*" which is the uniqueness of this method (Creswell, 2018).

Result and Discussion

Hannah Arendt's Freedom and Plurality

Hannah Arendt's freedom and pluralism departs from John Rawls' plurality thinking, which sees pluralism as a logical consequence from a variety of different thought patterns and perspectives, which cannot be combined, and which lead to one public space (Fatih, 2016). Jhon Harton in (Lehan, 2020) writes that the reality of a pluralist society is heterogeneous in ethnic, religious, and cultural groups while upholding the harmonization of social life in society. Indah stated Thomas Hobbes' opinion (Indah, 2018) in interpreting the law of a pluralist society as a political space that has the possibility of forcing the generalization of standards and harming plurality due to neglect of tolerance. Chantal Mouffe through writing (Koten, 2019) said that the reality of pluralism is always related to struggle, conflict and contradiction between common issues as a logical consequence.

Clifford Geertz then views that the state is a space for the integration of various essences and goals of life that are built up in many nations (Lehan, 2020). Gerald O'Collins and Edward G. Farrugia (1996) sees pluralism as a condition of acceptance of the heterogeneity of culture, religion, and political views (Ramdhani & Fahmy, 2023). Hannah Arendt views plurality as a renewal of political principles based on the notion of freedom (Pandor, 2020).

The components of plurality in Arendt's view are the existence of public space and personal space, changes and speech, and action (Jemali, 2018). Arendt emphasizes that action is a representation of freedom that imagines plurality and action cannot be confined by one particular outside party (Jena, 2011). Action is the highest form of understanding freedom, and action provides the hope of complete freedom without being tied to all forms of intervention, both repression and confrontation from external parties because plurality and freedom are fundamental human realities. (Ansyah, 2009; Lehan, 2020; Yanti et al., 2019).

Action is understood as part of an individual's opportunity to be able to represent his or her rights in public and private spaces, and the actions of each individual can produce and preserve a particular community (Fatih, 2016; Koten, 2019; Pandor, 2020). Arendt seeing that action is rooted in freedom that initiates a change in conditions from nothing (*ex nihilo*) into existence (*ab esse*), or in

other words Arendt said that action is possible because of fantasy (Pandor, 2020). Action in Arendt's view is realized through revelatory human action (Jemali, 2018), continuity between action and speech is a basic rule in political debate (Yanti et al., 2019).

Freedom as an effort to oppose outside intervention in individual life determination, decision making, and release restraint and oppression from outside parties (Koten, 2019). Arendt emphasizes that freedom is a representation of action aimed at renewing life, and getting out of the trap of exclusivity that ensnares oneself in order to create public space for the common good (Jemali, 2018). Arendt then classify freedom into two clusters namely (Simanjuntak, 2022): First, *Freedom of speech* which prioritizes morals, *equity, equality*, and harmonization of public space; and Second, *Freedom of religion* which upholds the religious freedom of every human being to have the right to choose the belief and religion according to himself, and the presence of tolerance as an intermediary in the heterogeneous reality of religious life. Hannah Arendt's definition of freedom is the availability of access to be able to start and initiate new steps that were not previously predicted and have been given to humans since they were in the womb (Fatih, 2016; Pandor, 2020). Freedom is rooted in acting as *differentia specifica* and interpreted as a whole and free and unbound from all manipulation and pressure in any form (Ansyah, 2009; Jena, 2011; Lehan, 2020). Freedom which is only limited to freedom from which wants humans to be able to get out of pressure in an effort to fulfill themselves, then this freedom is a negative form (Yanti et al., 2019) in understanding freedom because it only sees freedom as being free from certain ties.

The concept of human freedom according to Arendt will be actual in the representation of the public space as long as this freedom is not absolute for one group or individual alone, because other people outside themselves or their group also have the same right to freedom. Arendt also emphasized that freedom must lead to the ideal of living together in the reality of social groups and public spaces. Arendt promotes freedom in the internal sphere with humans as individuals who are not bound and entangled with a number of restrictions and are normal both through symbolic thoughts and behavior in their groups. External freedom in Arendt's view sees that human speech and manifestations are not shackled by pressure and domination by groups outside themselves. (Yanti et al., 2019).

Church Establishment and Cilegon Community Culture

In 1962 (Adrymarhanino & Nailufar, 2021; ASC News Cilegon, 2022; Sintru, 2022; Suliana & Bagur, 2022) the Trikora Steel Factory was established which was the beginning of a historical milestone in changing the demographics of the population of Cilegon City. This is reinforced through Government Regulation no. 35 of 1970 concerning Capital Inclusion of the Republic of Indonesia for the Establishment of the Company PT. Krakatau Steel to emphasize the change in Cilegon City from an "Agrarian City" to an "Industrial City" within the scope of the Serang Regency government (at that time Banten Province had not yet been established) and was the starting point of the "Industrial Revolution" (Adrymarhanino & Nailufar, 2021) which occurred in Cilegon City. The Cilegon industrial revolution also influenced the change in the livelihoods of Cilegon residents from farmers to factory workers and traders (Suliana & Bagur, 2022), from relying solely on agricultural products, became more varied with changes in the industrial revolution in Cilegon. The stipulation of these regulations then had implications for the issuance of Serang Regent's Decree No. 189/Huk/SK/1975 dated 20 March 1975 concerning the Closure of Churches or Congregation Places for Christianity within the scope of Serang Regency (1975) or Cilegon.

This was allegedly one of the consequences that automatically emerged as the end result of the “Bedol Village” incident which was propagated by the Banten ulama at that time. The group of kiai and ulama are community owners or landowners in Cilegon. The reality is that land for factory construction at that time was very limited, so the ulama provided guarantees to contractors against the release of land by the surrounding community (Martin & Dani, 2023). This agreement is certainly not without “profit”, because the ulama group and the local community require the establishment of a legally binding agreement that there is a guarantee that Christian minority groups are not permitted to build houses of worship and carry out religious activities. (Dodi, 2023a).

This has had long lasting consequences until now, even though the guarantee contained in the Decree of the Regent of Serang in 1975 has been legally invalidated since Cilegon City became an independent city, it is still firmly held by the old Cilegon groups and traditional leaders (Latif, 2023), for the sake of maintaining Islamic culture in Cilegon. This fact is one of the reasons for the rejection of church construction in Cilegon. A strong grip on the historical heritage of the past continues to be an obstacle in efforts to realize church construction in Cilegon. The following are some of the objections to church construction that have occurred in Cilegon:

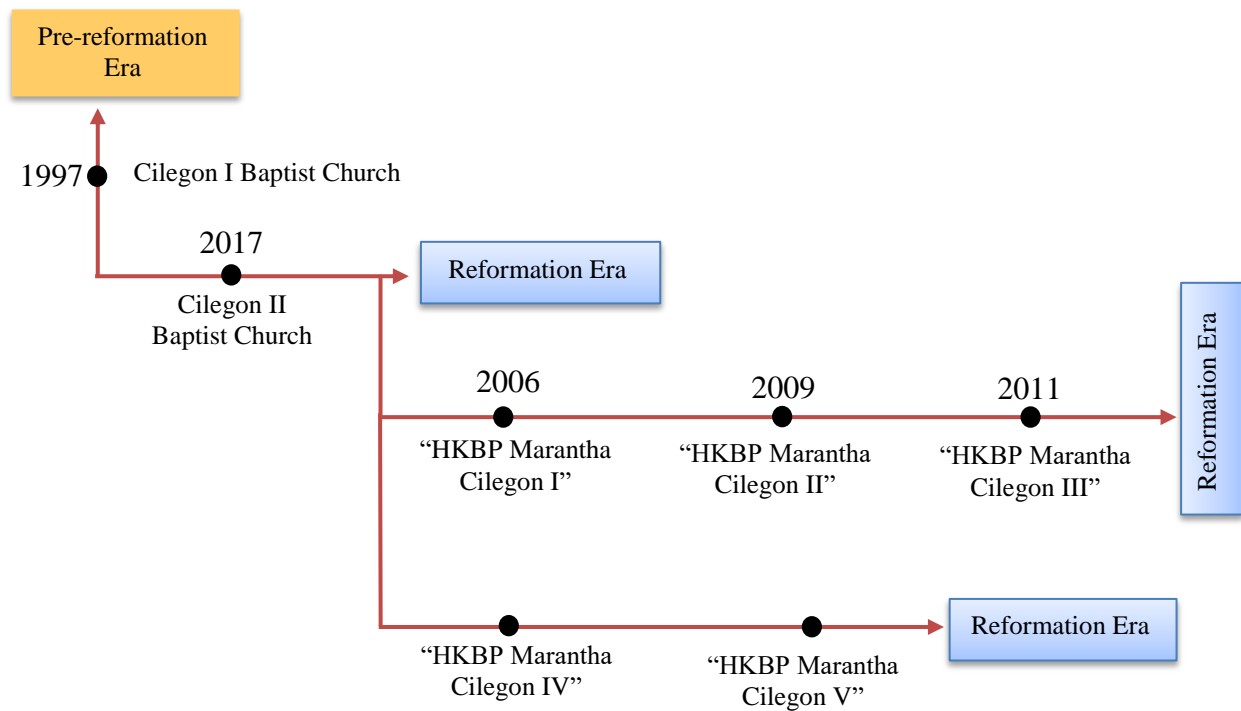


Figure 1. Milestone Rejection of the Church in Cilegon
 Source: (Alwan, 2022b; Prabowo, 2022)

The phenomenon of rejection of church construction in Cilegon is a classic period where the right solution has not been found as a solution to this problem. The rejection of the construction of a Church in Cilegon is a complex problem which, if we look back, will speak from Cilegon's past history, the 1888 Banten Peasants' Revolt, to the issuance of the Serang Regent’s Decree No. 189/Huk/Sk/1975 (Adam, 2023) which indicates a form of rejection of the development and implementation of worship by non-Muslim (Christian) communities in Cilegon City. The birth of a number of rejections of efforts to build a church in Cilegon City was seen as the impact of the murder

of ulama and kiai (Riansyah et al., 2021) as a propagator of Islam in Banten who greatly influenced people's lives (Martin, 2023) which culminated in the 1888 Cilegon Geger incident.

Differences in views regarding the fulfillment of permits for church establishments are allegedly the main problem and friction in church establishment efforts. This phenomenon is suspected to be due to the inconsistent attitude of regional officials and one voice regarding the chaos in church construction. The voice cast by the Mayor of Cilegon, Hedy Agustian, who also participated in signing the "edict" against building a church in Cilegon, was later challenged by his own representative's statement responding to the Minister of Religion's opinion, Gus Yaqut stated that development permits had been completed down to the lowest level of government (Alwan, 2022c; Hipni, 2022; Redaksi, 2022; Sakti & Fajar, 2022b; Yusuf, 2022).

Looking at the conflict network above, it can be seen that the church construction conflict in Cilegon has become a "vicious circle" problem for which it is difficult to find a solution, there are a number of self-protective "shields" from each party for their respective interests. The community considers that the approach and requirements have not been fully fulfilled by the Church construction team, while on the other hand the church claims that a number of administrative requirements have been fulfilled properly. Other actions were also taken by local regional officials, the deputy mayor, who stated that the licensing process had met with "agreement" however in another place, the Mayor of Cilegon participated in signing the rejection of the church construction, even though FOKAPELA members stated that this happened because of a trap from the mass action community (Martin & Dani, 2023).

A different opinion was then expressed by one of the local youth leaders, Ali Sobri who stated that these conditions had not been met but construction was still ongoing, and the existence of the church building was considered to be damaging Islamic values and culture which is strong in the principles of life of the Cilegon people. (Latif, 2023; Sakti & Fajar, 2022a). However, later this was also opposed by members of the Cilegon Interfaith Youth Communication Forum (FOKAPELA) that in fact the fundamental problem of this rejection did not lie in the problem of disruption of faith, but the approach and methods of the HKBP group community are unpleasant for the local community (Latif, 2023). This is because the location for the construction of the church is Sumur Wuluh, Cikuasa, Gerem Village, Grogol District, Cilegon City (Hipni, 2022; Sakti & Fajar, 2022b) it is still steeped in Islamic life and culture, so the community is shocked by the development plans, coupled with the reality that there has been no discussion from local residents.

The rejection of plans to build a Church in Cilegon and a number of upheavals of action to obstruct the establishment of a Church today should no longer be based on the Decree of the Regent of Serang in 1975. This is because after Cilegon became an independent municipality and was no longer under the government of Serang Regency, it was clear that this regulation was legally invalid.

Political Dynamics of Plurality and Religious Freedom

Plurality is a phenomenon that cannot be separated from a society that is heterogeneous in terms of race, class, customs and religion. Plurality should be accompanied by pluralism attitudes and perspectives as a form of tolerance to stay away from self-proximity to the line of conflict (Efendi, 2021) with pluralist elements, especially in the pluralistic reality of religion. This is not without basis, because psychologically humans will become radical and fanatical if they talk about religious issues (Martin & Dani, 2023).

Pluralism actually carries two important meanings, namely the reality that mass groups in the forum of society have unique and different characteristics (Kymlicka, 1995), and there is a regulation

that prioritizes the protection and normative appreciation of differences that exist in society itself (Purnomo, 2013). The meaning of plurality must be well understood, so that human beings, both individually and in groups, can present their uniqueness in the public or communal space (Lehan, 2020). Pluralism, which is inseparable from plurality, is a bias movement to embody the reality of differences in value systems and pluralist attitudes are continuous social coherents (Nurany et al., 2022).

Arendt has stated that plurality is the unity of freedom and its actualization must be realized in a *contidio per quam* (Pandor, 2013) with action as the highest embodiment of the meaning of rigid and conceptual freedom (Ansyah, 2009; Lehan, 2020; Yanti et al., 2019). This action is then manifested through two forms, namely *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* which is poured in the social public space of the community (Pandor, 2013). Action as the highest form of human life activity upholds plurality and freedom (Yanti et al., 2019) as an effort to reject and oppose the involvement and intervention of other parties in determining the attitudes and steps of individuals lives both personal and group (Koten, 2019).

The phenomenon of rejection of the construction of the Church in Cilegon can be indicated as a form of violation of *freedom of religion* echoed by Arendt, because *freedom of religion* provides freedom for each individual to be able to be religious and carry out religious rituals according to what he believes (Sihotang et al., 2020; Simanjuntak, 2022). In fact the realization of the right to freedom of religion has been regulated in Article 28 I which states that the realization of *freedom of religion* is a right that cannot be limited by any conditions and circumstances (Hafiz & Hasani, 2020; Hasani & Sigit, 2021; Mehfooz, 2021). This statement provides a bright point that the realization of freedom over a person's religious rights, both individual and group, should not be hindered or even constrained by a certain political and socio-cultural tendency or situation.

The form of *freedom of religion* is manifested through *forums internum* and *forum externum* which provide guarantees for every religious believer to freely and without coercion to choose and carry out worship activities according to the religion he adheres to (Hafiz & Hasani, 2020; Mulyana, 2001; Sinaga, 2012; Wahab, 2020). The right to establish a house of worship as a form of representation *freedom of religion* within the scope of *forum externum* at Cilegon, in fact it still encounters obstacles until now. The problem of conflict in the construction of houses of worship has certainly become a classic problem in the socio-cultural community of Cilegon which until now has not found a bright spot and the right solution to resolve the conflict.

The recent rejection of the construction of the HKBP Marantha Cilegon Church has also extended the history of rejection of church construction in Cilegon. Stretching back the ropes of history, the rejection of the proposal to build a church in Cilegon has occurred since 1995 and it is recorded that the Indonesian Baptist Church Cilegon has been rejected 5 times since 1995 and the HKBP Maranatha Church Cilegon has been rejected 4 times since 2006 (Alwan, 2022c; Yusuf, 2022). This is certainly a big question in the reality of a pluralist society, the attitude of tolerance as a philosophy of pluralism has not been well and completely reflected with the rejection of this development. Freedom of expression *freedom of religion* in *forum eksternum* (Hafiz & Hasani, 2020; Mulyana, 2001; Sinaga, 2012; Wahab, 2020) not realized conceptually, and another fact states that there are several groups and factions that vocally reject the construction of the Cilegon church (Martin & Dani, 2023).

The spirit of freedom carried by Hannah Arendt in this case is certainly not reflected in living conditions that are free from outside intervention, but on the contrary, the fulfillment of the rights of Christian (and Catholic) minority groups in Cilegon still “depends” on one or two certain groups who

dare to voice their opposition to the construction of churches in Cilegon (Sihotang et al., 2020; Simanjuntak, 2022). Protest against the construction of the HKBP Maranatha Church Cilegon on Wednesday, September 7 2022, for example, a mass group that identified themselves as the “Cilegon City Local Wisdom Rescue Committee” (Alwan, 2022c; Yusuf, 2022) became an important actor in the mass action movement. This was exacerbated by the participation of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Cilegon, Helldy Agustian and Sanuji Pentamarta in signing the “proclamation” of rejection of the establishment of a church in Cilegon (Alwan, 2022c; Shafira & Wibowo, 2022; Yusuf, 2022).

The difference of views regarding the fulfillment of church establishment permits is allegedly the subject of problems and friction against church establishment efforts. This phenomenon is suspected by the inconsistent attitude of local officials and one voice related to the chaos of church construction. The voice voiced by the Mayor of Cilegon, Hedy Agustian, who also participated in the signing of the “proclamation” rejecting the construction of a church in Cilegon, was then opposed by the statement of his own deputy who responded to the opinion of the Minister of Religion, Gus Yaqut by stating that the construction permit had been completed that up to the lowest level of government (Alwan, 2022c; Hipni, 2022; Redaksi, 2022; Sakti & Fajar, 2022b; Yusuf, 2022).

Religious freedom must be understood in its entirety and conceptually with the belief that every individual is given (Wijayanti, 2016) freedom to choose and carry out worship in accordance with the religion they adhere to in accordance with the guarantee of the law (Siringoringo, 2022). The phenomenon of violations of diverse freedoms that occurred in a number of regions, including Cilegon (Indonesia), shows that the implementation of religious freedom has not been fully realized, especially by minority groups. Identity as a unique society because of the different characteristics of most people has not been accepted in the imagination of plurality, especially by the people of Cilegon who are still confined by the fear of past history.

The discourse on the lives of minority groups has been reflected in active efforts to realize religious freedom in the midst of a Muslim-majority society. The freedom obtained by non-Muslim communities cannot be said to be fully accepted, because there are still several gaps between plurality and contextual freedom with the reality on the ground. This can be illustrated through the following table of plurality and freedom indicators initiated by Arendt:

Table 1. Indicators of *Freedom and Plurality* Arendt

No	Indicators	Room		Description
		Private	Public	
1	Action	✓	✓	Fully Implemented
2	<i>Ab esse</i>	✓	X	Not Fully Implemented

Source: Processed by the Writer Team, 2024

The table above explains how the implementation of religious freedom by the Cilegon Christian minority has not been fully fulfilled, because *ab esse* or willingness in the public sphere in this case is the realization of houses of worship has not been carried out until now. The Cilegon minority community has indeed been given access to carry out worship activities (actions) in public spaces through pastoral work activities and private spaces through the implementation of Misa every week. However, in terms of *ab esse* the people of Cilegon must worship “hidden” in the Mardi Yuana hall because they have not been given any leeway in establishing a house of worship. The rejection and opposition to the availability of houses of worship for Muslims continues to be turbulent to this day, especially by the elderly and hardline Cilegon communities.

The undeveloped image of plurality is the main obstacle in the movement of church construction efforts (and other non-Muslim houses of worship) in Cilegon, especially with the assumption that the Christian community is a society that does not want to blend and integrate with the local community. This is exacerbated by the memory of the past that is still carried by the elder group that the existence of the church building is considered to repeat the massacre of clerics and part of the Christianization efforts carried out by Christian groups.

Field facts have confirmed that the main problem of the polemic of refusing to build a church in Cilegon is based on the mindset and views of the community towards the existence of Christians in Cilegon. The young community has indeed been open to a number of changes and developments of the times that have strengthened the rapid flow of mass mobilization and have an impact on the heterogeneity of the current Cilegon community. However, another problem is found in the reality of the elderly group and indigenous peoples who are still oriental characteristics of the demographics of the Cilegon population by maintaining Islamic values and traditions.

This group is still not open to accepting the imagination of plurality and living together with other groups outside its group, and this is the main and fundamental problem of the effort to realize houses of worship in Cilegon. The understanding of plurality in the reality of a multicultural society is the main “investment” to at least change the views of the elderly and indigenous groups in Cilegon to accept the existence and presence of the Christian community in Cilegon. Pluralism is the foundation to instill strong religious literacy and moderation in every segment of the cultural life of the Cilegon community in order to give birth to a new paradigm in the implementation of holistic religious freedom and plurality.

Conclusion

The existence of conservative community groups who vocally voice their rejection of the construction of the Church in Cilegon is a form of the lasting existence of a local community that can hegemonize the culture of life of the people of Cilegon City. The understanding and views of plurality in religious literacy have been accepted by most youth groups in Cilegon who are also fighting for it through grassroots movements, but this has become taboo when discussed with the older groups of Cilegon society, and discussions related to the implementation of religious freedom are still a sensitive topic to be discussed. The understanding of plurality and freedom of worship for Catholics, which has not been fully implemented due to pressure from older groups and hard-line Muslims, has given the impression that the representation of living together to date has only been limited to gathering and drinking coffee with local residents, and not on the basic understanding that every human being as a unique person is entitled to a number of freedoms, especially in the reality of a pluralist society.

Based on the facts presented above, this confirms that the people of Cilegon, especially hard-line conservative groups, do not yet have the idea of plurality and literacy in religious moderation. The existence of certain groups that are members of several hardline community organizations that prioritize Islamic values constitute a small number of groups that dare to vocally oppose the establishment of the Church which is apparently driven by personal interests, both personal and group. The image of plurality that has not been developed by this group will complicate a number of forms of negotiation that occur in efforts to build the church, so through this research it can be suggested that: First, the government can hold a special program with the ultimate goal of building the imagination of religious plurality for the people of Cilegon; Second, it is hoped that further

research will be able to examine in more depth the relationship patterns of the three segments of Cilegon society and the reality of the debate over licensing places of worship between the community and the government; and Third, further research to be able to explore more holistically how the Cilegon hardline group is able to work with invisible hands and influence the final decisions of the majority of Cilegon society.

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