



The Role of Religious Leaders in Resolving Conflict and Political Violence in Pilrio in Air Gemuruh Village, Jambi Province

Peran Tokoh Agama dalam Menyelesaikan Konflik dan Kekerasan Politik pada Pemilihan Rio (Pilrio) di Desa Air Gemuruh, Provinsi Jambi

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Abstract: *This article discusses the role of religious leaders in mitigating political violence during the Village Head Election (Pilkades) or Rio Head Election (Pilrio) in Air Gemuruh Village. The success of religious leaders in handling political violence during the Pilrio is significantly influenced by their ability to effectively deliver political messages. The more constructive the role they play, the lower the intensity of political violence. This research aims to understand the relationship between the role of religious leaders and political violence, focusing on two key questions: 1) the chronology of political violence during the 2020 Pilrio, and 2) how religious leaders helped reduce this political violence. The study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, gathering data through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed using Creswell's qualitative model to gain a deeper understanding of the role of religious leaders in the local political context. The findings indicate that political violence was triggered by several critical issues before the Pilrio, such as election date disputes, funding problems, conflicts between parties, and money politics. Other issues during the Pilrio included problems with the permanent voter list, bureaucratic neutrality, and dissatisfaction with the election results. Lack of transparency further aggravated the situation. Religious leaders played a role in preventing political violence through messages of peace, mediation, and facilitating dialogue between candidates. The community believes religious leaders have a moral obligation to help resolve political conflicts, as they are trusted to uphold truth and justice values.*

Keywords: Religious leaders; Conflict resolution; Political violence; Pilrio

Abstrak: Artikel ini membahas peran tokoh agama dalam meredam kekerasan politik selama Pemilihan Kepala Desa (Pilkades) atau Pemilihan Kepala Rio (Pilrio) di Desa Air Gemuruh. Keberhasilan tokoh agama dalam menangani kekerasan politik selama Pilrio sangat dipengaruhi oleh kemampuan mereka dalam menyampaikan pesan politik dengan efektif. Semakin konstruktif peran yang dimainkan, semakin rendah pula intensitas kekerasan politik yang terjadi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami hubungan antara peran tokoh agama dan kekerasan politik, dengan dua fokus utama: 1) kronologi terjadinya kekerasan politik pada Pilrio tahun 2020, dan 2) bagaimana peran tokoh agama dalam meredam kekerasan politik. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, dengan pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan model kualitatif Creswell untuk mendapatkan pemahaman mendalam tentang peran tokoh agama dalam konteks politik lokal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kekerasan politik dipicu oleh beberapa masalah kritis sebelum pelaksanaan Pilrio, seperti penetapan tanggal, permasalahan pendanaan, konflik antar pihak, dan praktik politik uang. Masalah lain yang muncul selama Pilrio termasuk daftar pemilih tetap, netralitas birokrasi, serta ketidakpuasan terhadap hasil Pilrio. Kurangnya transparansi juga memperburuk situasi. Tokoh agama berperan dalam mencegah kekerasan politik melalui pesan-pesan damai, mediasi, dan dialog antar kandidat. Masyarakat menganggap tokoh agama memiliki tanggung jawab moral dalam meredakan konflik politik karena mereka dipercaya sebagai penjaga nilai kebenaran dan keadilan.

Kata Kunci: Tokoh agama; Resolusi konflik; Kekerasan politik; Pemilihan Rio.

Introduction

The election of the village head, also known as the Rio election (Pilrio) in Air Gemuruh Village, Jambi, is a significant event in the political and social life of the local community. Law 32 of 2004 on local government allows Indonesia to have absolute autonomy over Pilrio. In the context of decentralization, having autonomy over Pilrio represents an essential breakthrough for the consolidation of democracy at the local level. Pilrio now opens wider participation opportunities for the community in determining political leadership at the local level and triggers the emergence of aspirational, competent, legitimate, and dedicated leader.¹

However, having authority over Pilrio has not always been smooth and requires understanding and consistency in applying applicable laws and regulations. The main objective of the election is to elect a professional, legitimate, and democratic Rio Head who can lead in the forum of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and carry the mandate of regional autonomy.²

It should be noted that the people in Bungo Regency, precisely in Air Gemuruh, have elected the Head of Rio and Sekdum, following the circular letter of Bungo Regent Regulation No. 7 on March 25, 2020, with two Rio candidates. However, the election held in Air Gemuruh Village did not go as expected; there

was conflict and violence between the two Rio candidates which caused unhealthy political competition. Even until there was violence between residents of Rt 4 Lorong Makam and Rt 2 Lebak Bandung, the dispute had occurred three weeks before the Pilrio was held and increasingly heated until the peak of the day of the Pilrio. Still, Mr Sainuddin reconciled the dispute as a religious leader and village official in Air Gemuruh.

It is true that some individuals have used religion and religious identity to encourage fragmentation. Religious leaders themselves have sometimes incited and supported violence, including electoral and political violence.³ Specific literature on the part of religious leaders in countering electoral and political violence is limited, even less on how to involve leaders in taking on such roles. While highlighting specific initiatives involving religious leaders during the election cycle, the report also draws on literature that addresses clergy engagement more generally.⁴ In the particular case of the 2020 election in Air Gemuruh, the available literature is also limited to specific initiatives involving religious leaders in countering electoral and political violence, apart from a general discussion of their role in the lead-up to and after political violence.⁵

In this study, the theory employed was knife PowerCube theory. PowerCube is a framework used to analyze the forms, spaces, and dynamics of power in social and political contexts. In this context, the PowerCube theory can help understand the power involved in conflicts and political violence during village head elections. PowerCube identifies three interrelated dimensions of power: power within, power over, and power to. First, the dimension of power concerns individual and group understandings of power, i.e., how they interpret, interpret, and use it internally. In this case, religious leaders can provide the public with compassion and awareness about the importance of dialogue, tolerance, and mutual understanding in overcoming conflicts and political violence.⁶

Second, the dimension of power over relates to the distribution of energy in society and how that power is used to control or influence others. In the context of village head elections, religious leaders can mediate conflicts, facilitate dialogue between opposing parties, and ensure that power is not misused to create political violence. Third, the ability to change dimension relates to the capacity of individuals or groups to effect change and overcome injustice. Religious leaders can mobilize communities to work together to build peace, educate about the importance of justice and unity, and provide support and resources for conflict resolution efforts. Using PowerCube theory, this study can analyze how religious leaders use inner, upper, and power to change or resolve conflict and reduce political violence in the Village Head Election in Air Gemuruh Village. This theory can help understand the power dynamics involved and how the efforts of religious leaders influence ex-

isting power structures to achieve peace and justice in the context of the election of village heads.

Literature Review

Villalon (2015), in his research entitled “Cautious Democrats: Religious Actors and Democratization Processes in Senegal”, analyzes the role of religious actors in various stages of the long and gradual democratization process in Senegal. The research examines changes in their political influence, ranging from being pillars of stable but non-democratic states post-independence to more ambiguous attitudes as they enter the opening decade of democracy. Through a discussion of the interaction between religious change and the transition to democracy during the 1990s, this analysis discusses the role of religious actors in proposing debates about the substance of Senegalese democracy in the following decades. This article concludes that although religious actors play an essential role in the procedural development of democratic systems in Senegal, substantially, they also question some understanding of the essence of democracy. The final assessment of their contribution to democratic consolidation depends partly on our conceptualizations of democracy.⁷

Basedau (2015), in his research entitled “When do Religious Leaders Support Faith-Based Violence? Evidence From a Survey Poll in South Sudan” used an opinion survey of 102 religious leaders in Juba, South Sudan, as the first attempt to study the correlation of views on violence among religious elites more quantitatively in developing countries. The study analyzed when and why some religious leaders supported faith-based violence while others did not. Using a combination of innovative measures, the study’s findings have significant implications for the mobilization process. The results showed that leaders’ support for religious-based violence was largely independent of individual demographic or personal factors but related to religious attitudes.⁸

Kilonzo (2009), in his research entitled “Silent Religiosity in a Sniveling Nation: The Role of Religious Institutions in Promoting Post-Conflict Reconciliation in Kenya”, explains how the role of religious leaders in efforts to reduce the risk of violence in elections and politics, as well as support democratic and fair elections, can be seen from international experience, including in Kenya. Discussions around specific initiatives and the involvement of religious leaders in this context are also essential to consider. International experience shows religious leaders can significantly prevent conflict and violence during elections. For example, some initiatives in Kenya involve religious leaders pushing for peaceful elections.⁹

Kingsley (2012), in his research entitled “Peacemakers or Peacebreakers? Provincial Elections and Religious Leadership in Lombok” describes the direct election of the first provincial governor on the Indonesian island of East Lombok in 2008,

raising concerns about the potential for communal violence triggered by political factors. However, in reality, violence does not occur. Cooperation between government officials and non-governmental religious leaders is essential in maintaining social harmony. The critical role of local Islamic religious leaders, known as Tuan Guru, in facilitating community efforts to avoid conflict during the 2008 gubernatorial election is recognized in this article. The article also notes that Master has the potential to create social and political instability if they so desire. A rigorous approach to conducting elections can potentially prevent communal or political violence from occurring. As governments across Indonesia prepare to hold rounds of national, provincial, and local elections in the coming years, the valuable experience gained in Lombok has been crucial in providing lessons.¹⁰

Methods

The method used in this study is descriptive and qualitative. This means the data collected is not quantified but rather and this comes from interview manuscripts, field notes, personal documents, memo notes, and other official documents.¹¹ The type of research carried out is field research, which means that analysis is carried out in a specific location to research or investigate something that happens in that place.¹² The approach used is qualitative with descriptive research, where researchers try to describe a symptom or event that occurs at this time by photographing events. Events become the Centre of attention to be explained clearly and in detail. To conduct this research, researchers need direct information from the source about the condition of the subject and object of research to be studied.¹³

The data sources used in this study are primary data sources and secondary data sources. Preliminary data are obtained through a series of activities from field research conducted by observation and interviews. Researchers made observations in Air Gemuruh Village to observe conflicts and political violence in the Rio election; the observations went through three phases. The first observation occurred on March 13, 2020, in Air Gemuruh Village. The observation was to look at the role of religious figures in anticipating political violence. The second observation was carried out on April 14, 2020; researchers observed every activity related to the Rio election, ranging from the distribution of clothes, groceries and money. The third observation was made on April 15, 2020; researchers participated in raising Rio in Air Gemuruh Village.¹⁴

Then the interview was conducted from November 5-10, 2022. Researchers interviewed religious leaders, village officials, communities and other individuals involved in conflict and political violence. The interview focused on understanding the chronology of political conflict and violence, the role of religious figures in an-

ticipating political conflict and violence, and the role of religious figures in resolving conflict and political violence in the election in Air Gemuruh Village. Secondary data was obtained using literature studies that support and complement each other. Some secondary data sources in this study are research results from previous researchers and some literature reading and studying books that have something to do with the research object.

After the data was collected, researchers analyze and interpret the data using a qualitative approach. The analysis involves identifying critical findings on implementing religious moderation and its effect on interfaith harmony. Researchers use thematic analysis techniques to organize and categorize relevant data.

Results and Discussion

Chronology of Conflicts in the Rio Election

Air Gemuruh Village is located in Bungo Regency, Jambi Province, Indonesia. This village has an area of about 28.81 km² and a population of about 3,289 people (based on data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2020). Most Air Gemuruh villagers make a living as farmers, with the primary commodities being palm oil, rubber, and rice. The village also has several small entrepreneurs engaged in trading, such as grocery stores and food stalls. Air Gemuruh Village has excellent facilities and infrastructure, such as asphalt roads that connect the village with nearby towns, electricity, and clean water available. The village also has several educational facilities, such as elementary schools and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. In addition, Air Gemuruh Village has several exciting attractions, such as the Air Gemuruh waterfall in a beautiful wilderness and several exciting photo spots. However, like other regions in Indonesia, Air Gemuruh Village also experiences several problems, such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to health services, and limited employment opportunities.¹⁵

The results showed that religious leaders play a significant role in resolving conflicts and political violence in the context of Pilrios in Air Gemuruh Village. Religious leaders created a safe space for the conflicting parties to listen to each other and find mutually beneficial solutions. Since the beginning of the conflict on Monday, April 14, 2020, in Air Gemuruh Village, Bathin III District, Bungo Regency, Jambi Province, starting from the Rio Election Activities (Pilrio) held by Rt 03 at Air Gemuruh as the host. Regarding the implementation of the Pilrio, the Regent of Bungo has issued a letter of Bungo Regent Regulation (PERBUB) Number 7 of 2020 to all villages in Bungo Regency dated January 23, 2020, concerning "Amendments to Regent Regulation Number 35 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Regional Regulation Number 12 of 2018 concerning the Election, Appointment and Dismissal of Rio". The Village Appa-

ratus in Air Gemuruh village immediately distributed a circular letter that on April 14, 2020, would carry out Pilrio activities and expected that all Air Gemuruh people would send the names of prospective candidates for Rio 2020; as stated in the letter to “reference” Bungo Regent Regulation (Perbub) no 7, a regional regulation that provides specificity for the community in carrying out Rio elections, Especially for prospective candidates running as Rio, verification of the correctness of the Perbub is considered as one of the nodes in creating peace and clean political competition in various parties.¹⁶

At the beginning of the Pilrio period on March 20, 2020, several significant problems arose both before and during the implementation of the Pilrio in Air Gemuruh. Some crucial issues occurred before the performance of the Pilrio, among others: first, the problem of setting a date for the implementation of the Pilrio that occurred in Air Gemuruh Village. Secondly, funding problems were related to the ability of the regions to provide funds for Pilrio, most of which were used for honorariums and the lack of funds for Pilrio logistics. Third, the problem of screening and determining candidates where there are often conflicts and the practice of money politics. In addition, differences in interests also began to be seen during the selection process and determination of candidates.¹⁷

At the time of Pilrio implementation, several crucial problems must be expected. The first problem is the Permanent Voter List (DPT), an obstacle due to inaccurate population data. This happens to almost all Pilrios. The second problem is the neutrality of the bureaucracy and civil servants in implementing elections, which is often difficult to avoid and becomes an important issue. The third problem is the conflict that occurs in the implementation of Pilrio in several regions of different scales and scopes. The fourth problem is regulation or regulation related to Pilrio, which is still remains an important issue. The trigger for conflict in the direct election in Air Gemuruh Village, Jambi Province, has seemingly relative similarities. The similarity is the dispute over the results of the Pilrio that triggers the conflict. The initial embryo of conflict in the direct election can be said to occur in debates over the results of calculations carried out by the KPUD. The slight difference in the count results caused dissatisfaction with the pair of losing candidates.¹⁸ In the case of the Rumbling Water Pilrio conflict, the slight difference in numbers provoked discontent among the losing candidate’s spouse. It caused them to commit lawless acts, such as throwing stones at the village apparatus office, the Rio candidate, and the house belonging to the Rio candidate. The conflict occurred after the Supreme Court ordered the KPU to reconvene the election because of alleged dishonesty. This Supreme Court decision triggered conflict between Menur Yahya and Sahrul Pahmi in Pilrio in Air Gemuruh Village.

The Supreme Court's decision cancelled the results of the Pilrio previously set by the Jambi Provincial Election Commission on April 17, 2020, in which Sahrul Pahmi was announced as the winner. Elite conflict arose between two camps representing different ethnic groups, namely Sahrul Pahmi from Rt 04 and Menur Yahya from Simpang Drom after the results of the regional elections determined by the Jambi Provincial KPU differed from the Supreme Court ruling. The issue of ethnicity is also considered a factor that exacerbates the conflict. The impact of differences in recapitulation results and Central quick count interventions cause this to happen. On April 15, 2020, KPUD Bungo reported that the votes received at 19.00 WIB reached 4,900 votes. Candidate Sahrul led with about 70% of the vote, i.e. 3,430 votes. At the same time, Menur Yahya was in second place with around 30% of the votes. Until April 16, 2000, the Jambi KPUD had not released the overall vote count data because it was still waiting for data from the district/city KPUD.¹⁹

Changes in the order of votes of two pairs of candidates occur after votes are counted and entered into a recapitulation. This can be seen from the results of the plenary meeting recapitulation of the votes released by the National Unity and Community Protection Agency in the Progress Report on implementing the Rio Village Head Election in Air Gemuruh in 2020. The rules in Article 24 paragraph (5) of Law No. 32 of 2004 concerning Regional Government state that regional heads and deputy regional heads are directly elected by the people in one pair in the area affected, both at the provincial and district/city levels. However, when the Pilkada had to go through the second round, it was unclear how the game rules would be set. According to Article 24 paragraph (1) of Law No. 32 of 2004 concerning Regional Government, each region is led by a head of local government called a regional head. Furthermore, in paragraph (2), the provincial head in the province is called the governor. In the regency, it is called the regent, and in the city, it is called the mayor. In addition, paragraph (3) states that one deputy regional head assists the regional head.²⁰

There is no explicit provision regarding the conduct of the second round in Pilrio. Although Article 107 paragraph (4) of Law No. 32 of 2004 explains that if no election participant obtains 25% of the total valid votes, a second round will be held, followed by the first and second winners. Paragraph (5) states that if two pairs of candidates obtain the first winner, both spouses are entitled to participate in the second round. Paragraph (6) explains that if three or more teams of candidates receive the first winner, the first and second places are determined based on the broader voting area. Paragraph (7) states that if the second winner is obtained by more than one pair of candidates, the determination shall be made based on the broader area of votes. Meanwhile, paragraph (8) states that the pair of candidates

who get the most votes in the second round will be declared the pair of selected candidates.

On April 17, 2020, the results of the recapitulation of eight KPUD showed that Sahrul Pahmi was still in the top position with 3,038 votes or 65%, while Menur Yahya was in second place with 1,862 votes or (35%). Supporters of Menur Yahya suspected manipulation in the vote count in Bungo, protesting at the KPUD Office. This manipulation at the last count at the district level changed the order in which the candidate pairs they supported were voting. The KPU took over the leadership of the implementation of Pilrio in Air Gemuruh Village because the KPUD was considered no longer able to complete its duties independently and hampered the performance of the Bungo KPU. The KPU argues that Article 122 paragraph (3) and Article 29 paragraph (2) of Law No. 22 of 2007 concerning the Holding of General Elections allow such actions to be carried out. Article 122 paragraph (3) states that “if things occur that cause the provincial KPU or district/city KPU to be unable to carry out its duties, the stage of holding general elections can be carried out temporarily by the KPU above it”.

The Role of Religious Figures in Anticipating Conflict and Political Violence

Religion is an institution that provides guidance and the paths to happiness and salvation through the application of teachings taught by religious leaders and written in their respective Scriptures. To help devotees achieve happiness and salvation, religion needs a hierarchical or leadership structure that serves and accompanies society. Religious figures are those entrusted to lead religious people because they have good personal qualities. Religious leaders have special duties and roles, such as being an example for their people, especially during complex situations such as direct Pilrio, spreading welfare for humanity, directing people to form union with God, leading worship, teaching, uniting, and attending in the realization of faith. Religious leaders sometimes participated in efforts to prevent political violence and briefed many people, especially the elite, at rallies or political campaigns.

In Air Gemuruh, local religious actors and institutions have played essential role in intra-community mediation and conflict resolution within communities. Their ability to play such a role lies partly in the presence of a robust network. In Indonesia, it was found that the influence of Islamic religious leaders (Tuan Guru) is often reinforced by networks of organizations that promote loyalty and sources of patronage (e.g. pesantren, provision of social services). The following are some efforts made by religious leaders in anticipating conflicts and unhealthy political competition in the Rio election in Air Gemuruh Village:

1. Da'wah (Message of Peace and Support for Free and Fair Elections)

In a direct interview with a religious figure identified by the initials S, it was stated that before the Pilrio in Air Gemuruh Village, religious leaders always gave lectures or sermons to the community with the aim that they actively participate in a healthy Pilrio.²¹ Meanwhile, another religious figure, identified by the initials R, expressed the opinion that, in principle, giving lectures or da'wah to the community in welcoming Pilrio is the duty of religious leaders, considering that most people do not understand the importance of a healthy Pilrio so as not to result in conflict.²² Another opinion expressed by religious figures with the initials H.S. is that the issue of Pilrio is not only a matter for religious leaders because when talking about Pilrio, we are also indirectly talking about politics, which is inseparable from elements of society. Therefore, religious leaders are responsible for directing the community and providing a picture of a healthy and clean election so that people are not careless in choosing candidates and can exercise their voting rights as good citizens. There are various ways in which religious leaders can engage in addressing electoral and political violence and promoting peace.²² These efforts can be undertaken as individual leaders or through collaborative intra- or inter-community initiatives.

Aris, a student, explained the role of religious leaders in anticipating conflicts and political violence. He explained that usually, there are lectures, da'wah, or political sermons delivered to the public before the implementation of the election. He considered what the religious figure conveyed accurate because it benefited the interests of individuals and the community in Air Gemuruh Village. L. A also believes that these political appeals, lectures, or sermons to the public and prospective Rio candidates will further increase insight and knowledge and not create unhealthy politics.²³

Initials H.B., a citizen, responded to the statement by saying that the duty and responsibility of religious leaders are to foster and direct society to good things, including preventing and overcoming conflicts that occur in the election. Therefore, political advice, lectures or sermons delivered to the public on the eve of the election are essential. However, in delivering messages of political peace or classes, religious figures never take sides in participating in any of the particular candidates. Religious leaders have always been neutral in providing lectures, sermons or messages of political peace to the public.²⁴

Similar sentiment was also expressed by the initials of T.N., a resident, that religious leaders always give lectures, sermons or messages of political peace to the community before the election in Air Gemuruh Village. According to him, what is conveyed by religious leaders should be obeyed because it is in society's general interest.²⁵ However, religious leaders have always been neutral in delivering lectures,

sermons or messages of political peace and giving free will to the people to vote. Initials T.A., a resident, also expressed his opinion that religious leaders did play an active role in providing lectures, da'wah, and political messages to the community before the regional elections. However, according to him, religious leaders have always been neutral in directing the public to welcome local elections and not side with one particular candidate.²⁶ Although there were candidates for regent who provided financial assistance for the construction of church buildings, religious leaders did not demand that congregations/communities vote for such candidates. Instead, religious leaders gave freedom to choose candidates for regent according to their choices.

From the respondents' answers above, it can be concluded that religious leaders play an active role in preventing and overcoming political violence, directing the community not to accept bribes and actively participating in the Regent election in Air Gemuruh Village. However, religious figures are always neutral and impartial to every individual when performing their duties as religious leaders. Religious leaders provide freedom to the public to choose candidates according to their choice, considering that the right to vote is a human right. In addition, although some candidates often assisted the community, religious leaders do not coerce their congregations or communities to vote for such candidates.²⁷

Village Administrator I.B, indicated that, "The most important thing is that I, as a village official, have invited the *kiai* to deliver da'wah, even if the message is hard to hear. What's clear is that I have fulfilled my responsibility, especially after this incident. Political da'wah should be conducted a few weeks before the election. If people don't accept the *ta'lim* assembly, they need to be prepared for any consequences that might follow."²⁸

The law to deliver da'wah itself is already stated in the Quran. Many verses mention the duty to Muslims to invite goodness and constantly remind us of hypocrisy. According to Abdul Karim Zaidan, da'wah was originally the duty of the Apostles.²⁹ Each was assigned to ask humans to worship Allah SWT following the revealed *shari'a*; some were limited to certain races, and others were given to inviting all humanity regardless of place and time. Sainuddin further said that the obligation of da'wah is the responsibility of every Muslims; and so no Muslim woman should avoid it. So, it can be concluded that the da'wah law is collectively mandatory for those who can preach, and da'wah is required individually to study to be able to preach.³⁰

In essence, conveying the message of da'wah is not just giving; it requires several conditions, namely finding suitable material, knowing the exact state of the da'wah subject, choosing a representative method, and using wise language. The

message of da'wah itself is also inseparable from various discussions, where the debate is also inseparable from the material or material of da'wah itself.³¹

Indirectly, what a *da'i* says, his behavior and politeness will be a highlight for the community and the congregation in the *ta'lim* assembly. It seems absurd for a preacher to communicate the importance of doing the commandment to pray, but he does not do that. The importance of choosing mediators in overcoming political violence has been well thought out, and this is one of the essential factors in maintaining safe, peaceful and fair Pilirio activities and increasing responsible pilgrim leaders.³² The public discourse adopted by religious leaders can play a role that It is very important in how elections are played. They can proactively advocate for peaceful elections through rational and nonviolent discourse rather than a divisive mentality.³³ These messages can be articulated directly or through the publication and distribution of leaflets, through media (press releases, radio, television), or, more generally, through sermons at religious events.

After seeing the problems that occurred for two consecutive weeks, religious leaders and institutions spoke out against violence and defended justice and human rights. Religious leaders condemned post-election violence, and many parishes in the worst-hit areas protected those displaced by the violence. The community also supported dialogue between candidates, eventually leading to a unity government.³⁴ In an interfaith forum of village officials, the People of Air Gemuruh Village spoke out against unfairly competing political leaders, including an initiative to mobilize Air Gemuruh residents in all Rt with bribes. Some in the public came to support the prosecution of leaders who had instigated electoral violence.³⁵

2. Political Education (Seminars, Workshops and Open Discussions)

Religious leaders play a role in providing political education to the people in Air Gemuruh Village. Religious leaders teach democratic values, respect for dissent, and the importance of a peaceful political process. With increased political understanding, people tend to be more open to constructive dialogue and discussion. As expressed by the Goddess of the Lebak Bandung Alley community Rt 02:

*“Yes, usually before the election, village officials hold many seminars, workshops and open discussions in collaboration with the ustad. In the symposium, religious leaders also conveyed what to do during elections and not let there be unhealthy competition.”*³⁶

From the data above, it can be understood that religious figures play an important role in anticipating conflict and political violence before elections. Religious leaders also play a role in building the capacity of the community in Air Gemuruh Village to participate actively and peacefully in the election of village heads. Religious leaders provided training on how to organize courteous campaigns, encourage fair participation, and manage differences peacefully. Religious

leaders remind people of the importance of morality and ethics in the political process. They teach the values of justice, honesty, and respect for human rights. Thus, they can reduce the likelihood of political violence caused by injustice or ethical violations.

The Role of Religious Figures in Resolving Conflict and Political Violence in Pilrio

1. Intra-Religious Dialogue Between Candidates and Religious Leaders

Religious figures act as intermediaries between parties involved in political conflicts. Religious leaders encouraged dialogue, facilitated peaceful gatherings, and helped build bridges between warring groups. Through religious instruction grounded in human values and justice, religious leaders help reduce hostilities and promote reconciliation. Religious leaders have engaged in intra- and interfaith dialogue by religious umbrella organizations, development agencies and NGOs to improve relations, educate the electoral process, and promote the prevention of electoral violence.³⁷

While religious leaders have been well involved in addressing political violence, it is essential to understand how religion intersects with conflict dynamics and the role that religious actors can play. While some religious leaders may act as unifiers, uniting people to support nonviolent action, they may also have other motivations.³⁸ Some religious actors may use their newfound platform to subordinate members of a particular community or group. In some cases, the involvement of a religious leader alone can exacerbate conflict by reinforcing existing lines of blame. It is, therefore, essential to engage in conflict analysis to reduce the risk of inappropriate or ineffective engagement with religious actors.³⁹

People are interdependent. The importance of maintaining good relations between fellow humans and the creator (Allah SWT) makes people and politicians in implementing Pilrio must be more consistent and compete fairly in carrying out this activity. Based on the results of observations and interviews of researchers to the community who participated in the intra-dialogue activity, namely Mr Rizal as Rt 2 Lorong Lebak Bandung that in the intra-dialogue Ustadz Sainuddin said Islam teaches good relations with God alone is not enough, such as diligent prayer, zakat and fasting. But it must also be balanced with good relationships with fellow humans such as neighbors, co-workers, and the environment, and so does this Pilrio, in which, in addition to the element of work, must also be instilled to worship Allah SWT, so that the relationship between fellow humans and with Allah SWT. Becomes perfect.⁴⁰

2. Mediation and Reconciliation

Religious leaders encouraged open mediation between parties to the conflict. Through religious leaders, they can be united to find a peaceful solution and reconciliation. This can positively impact conflict-ridden individuals, reduce tensions and build bridges to restore severed relationships.⁴¹ Religious leaders help increase the understanding and awareness of individuals involved in conflict about political violence's root causes and negative impacts. Through an approach that boils down to religious values, religious leaders teach human values, empathy and mutual respect. Individuals involved in conflict can become more open to nonviolent conflict resolution with better understanding.

3. Provide Ethical and Moral Understanding

Religious figures often have moral authority respected by their communities. Religious figures use this influence to remind and teach ethical and moral values to their followers. By emphasizing the importance of respecting human rights, justice, and respect for life, religious leaders are helping to change the mindset underlying political violence.⁴¹ Forging peace and security: Religious leaders can create an atmosphere conducive to peace and security. Religious leaders rallied support and called on their communities to exert concerted efforts to prevent political violence. Through religious teachings and teachings that promote love, tolerance, and respect for plurality, religious leaders can build a strong foundation for peace and harmonious coexistence. As stated by Munir as a Rio candidate:

“When there was a conflict during the election of Rio, religious leaders gave a kind of proselytizing and advice about ethics and morals that should occur in this political world. Indeed, initially, no one wanted to make peace, but after several ways and efforts made by religious and government leaders, the conflict that led to violence ended peacefully.”⁴²

From the data above, it can be understood that religious leaders educate and mobilize the community. Religious leaders have complete access inside and outside the community. They use this position to educate and empower people about the importance of peacefully participating in the political process and helping people understand their rights. Religious leaders also mobilized communities to engage in peaceful campaigns, rally support for fair elections, and promote responsible political participation.

4. Election Supervision and Monitoring

Monitoring elections by religious leaders is an effective effort to ensure the village head election process runs pretty, free from violence, and transparently. Religious leaders cooperate with electoral institutions, such as the General Elections Commission (KPU) or village election committees, to ensure that the election pro-

cess runs following established rules and that similar incidents do not recur in the future. Religious leaders participated in coordination meetings and provided input to improve transparency and accountability. Establishing monitoring teams religious leaders also formed election monitoring teams consisting of trusted community members and civil society organizations. This team will monitor every election stage, including campaigning, vote counting, and results announcement.⁴³

Then religious leaders conduct live monitoring at polling stations to ensure no intimidation, pressure, or fraud occurs. They interact with voters, observe the electoral process, and note potential violations or irregularities. Making a monitoring report after the election is over, religious leaders collect data and information from the monitoring team to create a monitoring report. The report should contain findings, challenges, and recommendations for improving the integrity and transparency of future elections.

Religious leaders used monitoring reports as an advocacy tool to push for improvements in the electoral system. They communicate with electoral institutions, local governments, and other civil society organizations to fight for necessary reforms and emphasize the importance of a fair and violence-free process. By monitoring elections, religious leaders play a critical role in maintaining the integrity of village head elections, reducing the potential for political violence, and building community trust in the democratic process.

5. Code of Ethics

Public commitment by all stakeholders to nonviolence can effectively prevent tensions from escalating into violent conflict. Religious leaders initiated lobbying and working toward a peaceful electoral process. This religious figure encouraged political parties to develop and commit to the Political Party Election Code of Ethics, which emphasizes commitment to nonviolence.⁴⁴ It identifies a widely respected facilitator (an academic from the University of Guyana) to work with major political parties in developing codes of conduct and also involves the Election Commission. Religious leaders organized a public campaign for the signing of the Code, with representatives from all major religions, the Election Commission and all central donor governments and development agencies. Although the main opposition parties did not sign the Code, they are committed to the spirit and content of the Code, finding that a critical factor in the success of this initiative was that the election consisted of an everyday religious appeal to the population that cut across political and racial divisions that fueled election-related violence in Air Gemuruh.

Conclusion

Some crucial problems occur before the implementation of the Pilrion, among others: first, the issue of setting the date of the Pilrion. Secondly, funding problems were related to the ability of the regions to provide funds for Pilrion, most of which were used for honorariums and the lack of funds for Pilrion logistics. Third, the problem of screening and determining candidates where there are often conflicts and the practice of money politics. During the situation that occurred in the pre-implementation of the election, the first was the Permanent Voter List (DPT) which became an obstacle due to inaccurate population data. The second is the neutrality of the bureaucracy and civil servants (PNS) in implementing Pilrion, which is often difficult to avoid and becomes an important issue. The third is the conflict that occurs in the implementation of Pilrion in several regions with different scales and scopes. Fourth is the regulation or regulation related to Pilrion, which is still an important issue. Fifth, the problem that is often a source of conflict in the implementation of the election of the head of the Rio (Pilrion) is related to the court institution that decides disputes over the results of the election.

This is an adequate personal quality. Religious leaders have special duties and roles, such as being role models for their people, especially during heated and complex situations such as direct elections, participating in efforts to prevent political violence and briefing many people, especially the elite, at rallies or political campaigns. Efforts to overcome political violence include conducting intra-candidate dialogue, mediation and reconciliation, providing ethical and moral understanding, monitoring and monitoring elections and implementing election codes of ethics.

This research is expected to contribute to the academic literature on the role of religious figures in conflict resolution and political violence reduction. This research can complement and enrich existing knowledge by presenting empirical data and findings from the specific context of Air Gemuruh Village. In addition to contributing to academic learning, this research is also expected to provide practical insights for stakeholders in Air Gemuruh Village, Jambi Province. The findings and suggestions from this study can be the basis for developing policies, programs, and strategies that are more effective in involving religious leaders in resolving conflicts and political violence in regional elections. This research is also expected to be a starting point for further in-depth studies on the role of religious figures in similar contexts. The findings and methods used in this study can be an inspiration and reference for future studies that want to explore further the role of religious figures in conflict resolution and political violence.

Endnotes:

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