



# Islamic Theological Perspectives on Human Rights: Bridging the Gap between Faith and Universal Principles

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## Abstract

This research aims to examine how human rights (used here as HR) principles are interpreted and integrated within the context of Islamic theology, highlighting how Islamic teachings can support universal HR principles while maintaining a distinctive religious identity. The urgency of this study arises from the frequent discrepancies between global HR norms and legal and religious practices in predominantly Muslim countries, where conflicts in interpretation and application often pose significant social and political challenges. The methodology employed is qualitative with a content analysis approach, examining primary sources of Islamic religious texts such as the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as international HR documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. This study utilises extensive literature reviews, searching for interactions between religious principles and universal ethics to identify and understand differences and similarities in views on HR. Aligning with Indonesia's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those targeting reduced inequalities and gender equality, this research explores the potential of Islamic teachings in supporting these objectives. The findings indicate that Islamic teachings, through texts like the Qur'an and Hadith, often uphold principles consistent with universal human rights, such as justice, equality, and human dignity. However, there is significant variation in the application of these principles depending on local interpretations and state policies. The discussion in this study also highlights how theories such as Maqasid al-Shariah (The Objectives of Sharia) and Fiqh al-Aqalliyat (Jurisprudence of Minorities) can serve as bridges to integrate HR principles into Islamic practice, promoting intercultural dialogue and tolerance. In alignment with Indonesia's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 10 on Reduced Inequalities and Goal 5 on Gender Equality, the principles elucidated within Islamic teachings provide a robust theological foundation for advocating broader social justice and enhanced roles for women in society. The Qur'anic verses highlight the inherent value of equality and dignity for all, which not only supports efforts to diminish socio-economic disparities but also promotes gender equality as essential to societal well-being. Recommendations from this study include enhancing cooperation among scholars, legal experts, and policymakers to facilitate deeper integration of HR into religious practices and national law.

**Keywords:** Human Rights, Theology, Faith, Universal Principles.



## Introduction

Human rights, which ought to be universal and egalitarian, continue to be violated worldwide. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed in 1948, has yet to effectively eliminate serious violations such as modern slavery, which remains prevalent in countries like North Korea, Eritrea, and Mauritania. In affluent nations, forced sex work and poor working conditions for migrant workers contribute further to the record of violations. In 2022, the death penalty was still enforced in 47 countries, with China, Yemen, and Egypt being the most prolific in executions. From 1990 to 2020, there were 152 instances of the death penalty being imposed on individuals under the age of 18. This reality underscores the urgent need for more stringent international action and oversight to protect human rights (Statista, 2024).

Human rights have garnered increasing attention in global discourse, with various nations and cultures contributing to the development and implementation of these principles (Gemmell et al., 2023; Sekalala et al., 2021). Amidst this discourse, the acceptance and interpretation of human rights within the context of Islam often differ from Western paradigms, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of how these principles are perceived, applied, and contested within Islamic traditions and Muslim-majority countries (Takahashi, 2023).

Universally, human rights aimed to be egalitarian and protective of individual dignity, are still contested globally despite the foundation laid by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the context of Indonesia, aligning Islamic theological principles with the nation's commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals—specifically Goal 10 on Reduced Inequalities and Goal 5 on Gender Equality—highlights a unique opportunity. These goals emphasize the urgency of integrating diverse cultural and religious insights to combat inequality and empower women. This research explores how Islamic teachings, with their rich heritage of promoting justice, equality, and human dignity, can contribute effectively to these global objectives, thereby bridging the gap between faith-based ethics and universal human rights standards.

Historically, the concept of human rights formally emerged in the West through the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, which emphasized values such as individual freedom, equality, and non-discrimination (Kuźelewska & Tomaszuk, 2022; Zandy, 2019). These principles, rooted in the European Enlightenment, stress rationality and individual rights, yet are often regarded as secular approaches that inadequately consider the spiritual and religious aspects valued within Islamic tradition (Nikolić, 2020).

In the context of Islam, human rights are understood through the lens of Sharia law and religious ethics. The Qur'an and Hadith, as the foundational texts of Islam, provide guidance on justice, compassion, and the protection of individuals. Although there are principles within these texts that align with human rights, such as the right to life and social justice, the interpretation and application of these principles often vary depending on local cultural and social contexts (Čustović, 2020). For example, in some regions, the application of Sharia principles regarding gender equality may be interpreted conservatively, restricting women's rights in areas such as education and employment, whereas in others, more progressive interpretations align closely with international human rights standards.

The application of human rights in Muslim-majority countries varies significantly. Nations such as Indonesia and Tunisia have endeavoured to integrate human rights principles into their constitutions and national legal systems, demonstrating that Sharia and human rights can complement each other when appropriately managed and in the spirit of *ijtihad* (creative interpretation) (Virgili, 2021).



However, some countries face challenges in implementing human rights due to conservative interpretations of Islamic law. In several nations, issues such as freedom of religion, women's rights, and freedom of expression remain controversial. Factors such as political regimes, the influence of conservative clergy, and resistance to Western influence play significant roles in shaping human rights policies (Bourchier, 2019; Zhussipbek et al., 2020).

Within Islamic religious texts, there exists a theological foundation that supports the understanding and protection of human rights. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of justice ('adl) and compassion (rahmah) as essential elements of civilized life. However, there are challenges in interpreting these texts consistently with modern human rights principles, particularly concerning women's rights in matters such as inheritance and marriage (Ashath, 2021; Prasojo, 2023).

Many Islamic scholars critique the Western model of human rights for overemphasizing materialistic and individualistic values, which they argue are incompatible with the collective and spiritual values in Islam. They stress the importance of balancing individual rights with social responsibilities, as well as freedom with morality (Akdeniz & van Veelen, 2021; Izmailova, 2023). Cultural and historical contexts also play a crucial role in shaping the understanding and application of human rights in Islamic countries. Colonial history, for example, has left a deep imprint on views of human rights as a product of Western imperialism, influencing resistance to these concepts (Abdelkader, 2020; McNair et al., 2022).

The response to human rights in the Muslim world is highly diverse, reflecting the plurality of religious traditions and socio-political contexts (Gill, 2019; Shaery-Yazdi, 2020). On the one hand, progressive groups seek to harmonize human rights principles with Islamic teachings, emphasizing the importance of *ijtihad* and contextual interpretation. On the other hand, conservative groups reject the application of Western human rights, viewing them as a threat to traditional norms and religious authority.

Religion is also "...a major cultural, social, political, and economic factor in many official development assistance (ODA) recipient countries and understanding religious dynamics and the role of faith communities and actors is crucial for sustainable development. While faith communities have endured and thrived the world over, a wave of modernist, secular social change dominated development practice and discourse from the second half of the 20th century. It was assumed that religion had become outdated and would eventually disappear. However, faith communities, actors, and assets continue to occupy a critical space. Accordingly, development discourse and practice have seen a new wave indicating a turn to recognizing the significant role of religion. Many faith actors have also been involved in development policy, including a commitment to join the global collaboration around achieving the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" (Tomalin, Haustein, & Kidy, 2019).

This research focuses on an in-depth analysis of Islamic theological perspectives on human rights, aiming to identify and address challenges and opportunities in harmonizing Islamic teachings with human rights principles. It involves proposing new approaches that can bridge the gap between Islamic beliefs and universal human rights principles, enabling a more inclusive and effective understanding and application. The success of this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the academic literature, particularly in the context of Islam and human rights, and to provide valuable insights for policymakers, academics, and practitioners. By expanding the understanding of the potential synergy between Islam and human rights, the findings of this research may facilitate the formulation of more informed policies and more appropriate intervention practices to advance human rights in various social and cultural contexts.

## Literature Review



In this review, we will explore the concept of human rights (HR) within the context of Islam, beginning with a basic understanding of HR according to Islamic teachings. The study encompasses the history and development of HR thought within the Islamic tradition, reflecting the interaction between religious norms and the demands of universal ethics. By tracing the evolution of this thinking, the review aims to identify how HR principles have been interpreted and adapted within different religious contexts.

Furthermore, the review will address the universal principles of human rights, focusing on the definitions and scope of HR as globally accepted (Gostin et al., 2023). This research also evaluates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights issued by the UN and its correlation with Islamic values. The study aims to understand how this global declaration resonates or conflicts with principles held within Islamic teachings, highlighting areas of potential synchronisation or divergence.

Tomalin, Haustein, and Kidy, (2019:113) recommend that governments and NGOs should recognize that “faith actors” have a strong international profile and are familiar with global development processes and discourses. They should thus be considered more as development partners and there must be engagement with them according to their relative background and expertise, on issues such as using theological perspectives on HR to bridge the gap between faith and universal societal principles. Thus partnerships and collaborations are to be encouraged and facilitated in society. In any event “Faith actors are key to this since so many people who have the most to benefit from the SDGs live in the Global South where levels of religiosity are high and religious organisations are present in the most remote locations”

By integrating these two aspects, this review aims to establish a robust theoretical foundation for further research on the compatibility and conflicts between HR and Islam. The results are expected to provide deep insights into how Islamic norms can collaborate or clash with internationally recognised HR standards, which is crucial for developing more inclusive and harmonious policies and dialogues in a pluralistic global context. Subsequently, the author selects several relevant previous studies, including:

Chu and Perry (2023), Methodology: Chu and Perry conducted a qualitative study involving in-depth interviews with church leaders in Hong Kong to explore how their theological understanding influences their practices and views on human rights. Results: Findings suggest that many church leaders consider the integration of HR essential in their theological practice, viewing social justice as a core element of gospel preaching. Difference: Unlike the study on Islamic theological perspectives, which explores the integration of traditional Islamic views with modern HR principles, Chu and Perry specifically focus on how Christian theology is practiced in the context of Hong Kong churches, emphasizing the direct application of theological beliefs to social justice issues.

Francis et al. (2020), Methodology: This study used a quantitative survey method to assess attitudes towards civil HR among Italian sociology students, examining the influence of their religious beliefs and theological education. Results: The research indicated that religious and theological backgrounds significantly impact students' views on human rights, often correlating with more conservative stances towards civil liberties. Difference: Francis et al.'s study focuses on the impact of religious education on attitudes towards HR among students, differing from the exploration of formal theological reasoning within Islam and its scriptural basis for HR as discussed in the study on Islamic perspectives.

Kovalenko et al. (2023), Methodology: This study employed a theoretical analysis to discuss the theological-legal value of human rights through various modern legal understandings,



providing a broad legal and theological discourse. Results: It concluded that there is a complex interplay between theological principles and legal interpretations of human rights, suggesting that a deeper theological understanding could enhance legal frameworks. Difference: Kovalenko et al. discuss the theological-legal value of HR from a broader and more theoretical perspective, not specific to Islam, differing from the study focused on the harmonisation between Islamic theological principles and HR.

Resane (2021), Methodology: Resane conducted a text analysis of theologian Jürgen Moltmann's work in dialogue with liberation theologians to revive the role of Black Theology in democratic South Africa. Results: Findings show that the dialogue between Moltmann's theology and liberation theology enriches the understanding and practice of Black Theology in addressing social and political challenges in South Africa. Difference: Resane focuses on the influence of theology in a specific socio-political context, using theology as a tool for social dialogue and change, differing from studies exploring how Islamic principles can be integrated with HR to create a broader and more inclusive understanding.

## Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach with a focus on content analysis to understand the Islamic theological perspective on human rights (Creswell, W. John & Creswell, 2018). This methodology was chosen due to its capacity to systematically interpret the messages contained within written communications, such as religious texts and human rights documents, enabling an in-depth exploration of how Islamic teachings interact with universal human rights principles. This approach delves into the depth and complexity of theological interpretations and the legal implications that arise from these texts in the context of human rights.

The primary data in this research is derived from key Islamic religious texts such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and various exegeses, which are utilised to explore Islamic views on justice, freedom, and human dignity. Secondary data includes international human rights documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as relevant academic articles and publications. The use of both types of sources provides a comprehensive foundation for analysing and comparing Islamic perspectives with internationally recognised human rights principles. The data collection techniques for this research are entirely literature-based, gathering relevant information from electronic databases, physical libraries, and trusted online sources (Weyant, 2022). This approach ensures that the analysis is conducted based on valid and reliable sources, which is essential for maintaining the integrity of the research. This process enables the collection of rich data to be further processed through content analysis (Krippendorff, 2022).

Data analysis is conducted through content analysis techniques, where the obtained texts are dissected to uncover the frequency, themes, and patterns related to human rights within Islamic discourse. This includes meticulous data coding to extract and categorise information according to relevant themes, facilitating the identification of similarities, differences, and unique nuances in human rights views between Islamic and international sources. The validity of the data is tested through triangulation, using various sources and interpretations to verify the consistency and accuracy of the findings, thereby enhancing the reliability of the research results in depicting the relationship between Islam and human rights (Flick, 2020).

## Results and Discussion

### Theological Perspectives on Human Rights in Islam

In the context of Islam, the understanding of human rights (HR) is often viewed through a distinct theological lens, where religious teachings and Sharia law play a crucial role in shaping





views on justice, freedom, and human dignity (Rane et al., 2020). This theological perspective allows for an understanding of how HR principles are interpreted and applied in societies that are grounded in Islamic values. The primary sources in Islam, such as the Qur'an and Hadith, not only provide ethical and legal guidance but also outline the fundamental rights that must be respected and protected. Consequently, this subsection will explore how these texts and their interpretations by scholars influence the understanding and implementation of HR in a religious context. The relevant Qur'anic concepts related to HR are as follows:

**Table 1. Human Rights and the Qur'anic Declarations**

No.	Surah and Verse	Content of the Verse	Key Concepts Supporting Human Rights
1	Al-Hujurat 49:13	"O mankind, indeed We have created you from a male and a female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted."	Equality and Anti-Discrimination
2	An-Nisa 4:135	"O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever acquainted with what you do."	Justice and Moral Obligation
3	Al-Baqarah 2:256	"There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing."	Freedom of Religion
4	Al-Isra 17:70	"And We have certainly honoured the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference."	Human Dignity and Honour
5	An-Nur 24:33	"But do not compel your slave girls to prostitution, if they desire chastity, to seek [thereby] the temporary interests of worldly life. And if someone should compel them, then indeed, Allah is [to them], after their compulsion, Forgiving and Merciful."	Prohibition of Slavery and Exploitation
6	Al-Mumtahanah 60:8	"Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly."	Tolerance and Social Justice

In the Islamic context, human rights are often understood through the perspective provided by the Qur'an. A foundational verse is Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 13, which underscores the importance of recognition of equality and anti-discrimination. According to Hamka's interpretation, this verse emphasises that an individual's virtue is determined not by race or social status, but by their piety towards Allah. Maraghi adds that this verse invites humanity to know one another, which forms the basis of multicultural understanding and tolerance in a pluralistic society (Hamka, 2012).

Another verse, An-Nisa verse 135, teaches the importance of justice and being a fair witness, even if it means testifying against oneself or close relatives. According to M. Quraish Shihab's interpretation, this verse underscores justice as a fundamental value in Islam that should not be compromised, regardless of subjective conditions that might influence a person. Aidh Al-Qarni in his interpretation emphasises that justice must be upheld regardless of social status or wealth, considering Allah as the true and most just judge (Shihab, 2015).

Surah Al-Baqarah verse 256, famously stating "There is no compulsion in religion," affirms the principle of religious freedom in Islam. A brief interpretation by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs indicates that this verse explains the importance of choosing one's religion freely without coercion, reflecting the principle of religious tolerance (Kemenag, 2016).



Thabathabai further explains that this verse establishes freedom as a fundamental human right, which must be respected and protected by all communities (Thabathaba'i, 1991).

In Surah Al-Isra verse 70, the respect and dignity that Allah has bestowed upon humans are detailed. Ibn Kathir in his interpretation states that this verse demonstrates human superiority over other creatures, and it commands mankind to treat one another with honour (Katsir, 2018). Zamakhsyari adds that this privilege imposes a responsibility on humans to act justly and respect the rights of others, as they have been granted this privilege by Allah (Al-Zamakhsyari, 1995).

An-Nur verse 33 instructs Muslims not to force women into prostitution and orders the protection of those forced into such acts. Jalalain's interpretation asserts that Allah desires freedom and honour for every individual, and forcing someone into prostitution violates both principles (As-Suyuthi & Al-Mahally, 2015). Fakhr al-Din al-Razi in his interpretation explains that this verse demonstrates Allah's wide compassion and His command to protect the weak and oppressed in society (Al-Razi, 2012).

Lastly, Surah Al-Mumtahanah verse 8 speaks of justice and kindness towards those who are not hostile. Baydawi in his interpretation explains that Islam teaches fair and kind treatment to everyone, including those with differing beliefs, as long as they do not exhibit hostility (Baydawi, 2010). Jazairi adds that this verse underscores the importance of maintaining good social relations with everyone, which is a crucial aspect of preserving peace and harmony in society (Al-Jaza'iri, 2003).

In the current global context, the principles of equality and anti-discrimination contained in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13 remain relevant in global efforts to combat all forms of racial and ethnic discrimination. As the international community strives to strengthen solidarity among nations, the Islamic understanding of universal brotherhood irrespective of background can provide a strong ethical foundation. In this era of globalization, where issues of migration and integration are at the forefront, adopting the values contained in this verse could enhance collective efforts to create more inclusive and harmonious societies (Kefallinou et al., 2020; Stamm, 2023).

Furthermore, An-Nisa verse 135 emphasizes justice as a critical foundation in managing societies and state governance. In the context of global human rights, this universal principle of justice often faces significant challenges, such as in cases of systemic injustice or abuse of power. Given that justice is one of the pillars of human rights, adopting an Islamic approach to enforcing justice can not only strengthen legal systems but also promote higher public ethics in policy and governmental practices.

Al-Baqarah verse 256, which speaks about religious freedom, becomes critically important in the context of religious conflicts and social tensions that frequently occur around the world. In many countries, belief-based discrimination remains a pressing issue that demands fair and sustainable solutions (Gupta & Vegelin, 2023). This verse provides a foundation for advocating for freedom of religion and belief in international forums and domestic policies, affirming that freedom of religion is an inalienable right.

Surah Al-Isra verse 70, which glorifies humans, teaches that every individual deserves respect and fair treatment, a principle that continues to be pursued in international human rights declarations. In facing issues such as poverty and inequality, recalling the obligation to provide equal access to resources and opportunities can be strengthened through this verse, which emphasizes the need to treat all people with dignity and justice regardless of their background.



By exploring An-Nur verse 33 in a global context, we see the importance of combating practices such as human trafficking and labour exploitation (Ip, 2022). Interpretations calling for the protection of the most vulnerable, including those forced into prostitution, show how Islam proactively opposes exploitation and supports global efforts to eliminate all forms of modern slavery and human exploitation.

Surah Al-Mumtahanah verse 8, which supports tolerance and social justice, could guide international diplomacy and interfaith relations. At a time when sectarian tensions and ethnic conflicts often spark violence, this verse reminds of the importance of basing policies on principles of justice and tolerance, as well as supporting peace and reconciliation initiatives that can strengthen social harmony.

Implementing these values not only has implications for the Muslim community but also for the global society at large. As global interaction and interdependence increase, integrating the Islamic theological perspective on human rights into global dialogue can help bridge cultural differences and promote stronger international understanding and cooperation (Kreinovich, 2018; Yeshanew, 2023).

In practice, implementing this perspective requires collaboration among religious leaders, policymakers, and human rights activists to ensure that interpretations and applications of these principles are in line with contemporary social needs and realities. This involves ongoing dialogue, education, and advocacy to ensure that human rights values are respected and promoted in all aspects of societal life.

Finally, in the face of current global challenges such as the refugee crisis, climate change, and global inequality, the verses of the Qur'an provide a rich perspective that can inspire solutions based on dignity, justice, and equality. Thus, the Islamic theological perspective on human rights offers a valuable framework in global efforts to achieve a more just and sustainable society. In alignment with Indonesia's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 10 on Reduced Inequalities and Goal 5 on Gender Equality, the principles elucidated within Islamic teachings provide a robust theological foundation for advocating broader social justice and enhanced roles for women in society. The Qur'anic verses highlight the inherent value of equality and dignity for all, which not only supports efforts to diminish socio-economic disparities but also promotes gender equality as essential to societal well-being. By interpreting these teachings through the lens of modern human rights discourse, Indonesia can leverage its rich Islamic heritage to foster a more inclusive and equitable society, where the reduction of inequalities and the empowerment of women are seen not only as global objectives but as intrinsic elements of the Islamic ethical framework.

### Challenges and Opportunities in Harmonization

In the efforts to harmonize human rights (HR) principles with the practices and laws in the context of Islam, there are significant challenges and opportunities. Challenges often arise from differences in the interpretation of Sharia law and its application in social life and state policies based on Islamic principles. Issues such as freedom of religion, women's rights, punishment and justice, as well as freedom of the press and expression, highlight areas where global HR principles may conflict with local or national practices. Through the recognition and deep understanding of these conflicts and mismatches, harmonization efforts can be directed to achieve solutions that not only comply with international norms but also respect traditions and cultural values (Xie et al., 2018). At this level, the author analyzes several conflict areas occurring in the context of HR as tabulated below:

**Table 2. Areas of Conflict in Global HR**

No.	Area of Conflict/Discrepancy	Description	Related Human Rights Principles
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1	Freedom of Religion and Belief	In some countries with Sharia law, conversion from Islam to another religion is prohibited and considered apostasy, which can be severely punished.	Freedom of religion and belief, including the right to change one's religion or belief.
2	Women's Rights	Traditional interpretations in some Islamic communities restrict women's roles in education, employment, and political participation.	Gender equality and empowerment of women.
3	Punishment and Justice	Sharia law practices in some countries include punishments such as stoning and amputation, which are considered violations of the prohibition against torture.	Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.
4	Freedom of the Press and Expression	Restrictions on freedom of the press and expression, especially regarding criticism of religious or political authorities in some Sharia-based countries.	Freedom of expression and information.
5	Protection of Minorities and Vulnerable Groups	Religious and ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups often face discrimination or violence in some countries.	Protection against discrimination and violence towards minorities and vulnerable groups.

In an increasingly connected global context, the Islamic perspective on human rights offers unique insights that often intersect and conflict with international norms. The challenge of harmonizing Sharia law with HR principles has sparked intense discussions in various international forums and civil society. One prominent area is the freedom of religion and belief (Chaney, 2020; Mucaj & Muqaj, 2021). In some countries that implement Sharia law, conversion from Islam to another religion is not only prohibited but also threatened with severe punishment, known as the penalty for apostasy. This phenomenon clearly contradicts HR principles that guarantee individuals the right to freely choose and change their beliefs.

Freedom of religion, considered a fundamental human right, faces serious challenges in this practice. Although Islam recognizes religious diversity as part of the divine plan, strict and fundamental interpretations of Sharia law by some countries have reduced the space for religious pluralism and tolerance (Indainanto et al., 2023). This situation not only affects those who may be seeking their own spiritual path but also impacts social dynamics and international relations, where countries with strict policies often receive criticism from the global community.

On the other hand, issues of gender equality and women's empowerment also occupy a significant place in discussions about Islam and HR (Garnier et al., 2020; Infante & Darmawan, 2022; Smith & Sinkford, 2022). Traditional interpretations that restrict women's roles in education, employment, and political participation are in stark contrast to the gender equality principles advocated by international HR declarations. Although many Muslim countries have made progress in promoting women's rights, traditional practices in some communities remain a serious barrier to achieving full equality.

These challenges highlight the discrepancy between religious norms and the need for policies that support gender equality. Education and empowerment of women are not only key to social and economic development but also essential in the fight for justice and equality under the law. By increasing women's access to all aspects of social life, Islamic countries can come closer to the ideal of equality advocated by HR.

Furthermore, punishments in Sharia law, such as stoning and amputation for certain crimes, have raised international concerns about the use of punishments considered cruel and inhumane (Hussain et al., 2022; Nayff & Mohammed, 2020). These practices conflict with HR conventions that condemn torture and degrading punishment. In this context, the challenge faced is how to interpret Sharia law in a way that considers contemporary contexts and evolving HR norms.



The conflict between freedom of expression and restrictions imposed by some Islamic countries also shows a clear disparity. In societies that strictly apply Sharia law, criticism of religious or political authority is often seen as a serious violation and can be severely punished. These restrictions hinder freedom of the press and expression, which are important pillars of democratic and open societies.

Finally, the protection of minorities and vulnerable groups such as ethnic and religious minorities, in some Muslim societies, is not always guaranteed (Ferri, 2021; Ruiz Vieytez, 2024). Discrimination and violence against these groups are often overlooked, raising serious questions about the application of HR principles that demand protection against discrimination and violence. This requires greater efforts in strengthening laws and policies that protect all citizens regardless of their background. All these areas of conflict and discrepancies not only clarify the challenges faced in harmonizing HR with Islamic practices but also highlight opportunities for dialogue, education, and reform that can produce solutions respecting both religious norms and human rights.

In addressing the challenges of harmonizing Islamic practices with global human rights standards, Indonesia's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 10 on Reduced Inequalities and Goal 5 on Gender Equality, becomes increasingly relevant. These goals provide a strategic framework to tackle systemic barriers and promote inclusivity within the context of Islamic law. Efforts to diminish social and economic disparities and to empower women are aligned with the progressive interpretations of Islamic teachings that advocate for justice, fairness, and dignity for all individuals. By integrating these SDGs into the national discourse on human rights and Sharia, Indonesia can lead by example in demonstrating how religious principles can coexist with and even bolster efforts toward achieving global standards in equality and women's rights, fostering a more inclusive society where every individual's rights are respected and protected.

### Approaches to Bridging Human Rights Gaps

Addressing the gap between universal Human Rights (HR) principles and specific practices in the context of Islam requires creative and inclusive approaches (Lohman & Barrett, 2020; Rodrigues et al., 2023). These approaches must acknowledge and respect the depth of Islamic teachings while striving to reconcile these with international HR norms. This involves not only dialogue between scholars and HR experts but also close cooperation among religious communities, governments, and non-governmental organizations to create solutions acceptable to all parties. Several applicable approaches are identified below:

**Table 3. Strategies for Integrating Islamic Principles in Universal HR**

Strategy	Description	Implementation Methods
Dialogue and Education	Facilitates mutual understanding of Islamic values and HR principles through interfaith dialogue and inclusive education.	Developing curricula that integrate HR and Islamic teachings, organizing workshops and seminars.
Legal Reform	Aligning Sharia law with international HR principles, especially regarding gender equality and freedom of religion.	Involving scholars, legal experts, and policymakers in the review and reform process.
Strengthening Institutions	Strengthening national HR institutions with sensitivity to the Islamic context to enhance HR monitoring and implementation.	Establishing institutions with a clear mandate, training staff, and providing adequate resources.
Advocacy and Partnerships	Building partnerships between HR organizations and the Muslim community to support local initiatives and HR advocacy.	Initiating cooperation between international and local HR organizations, Muslim communities, and religious institutions.
Media Utilization	Using media and technology to disseminate information about the integration of Islam and HR.	Social media campaigns, webinars, and publishing educational materials online about Islam and HR.



Rights-Based Approach	Applying HR principles in religious policy and practice to ensure the protection of individual rights.	Integrating HR principles into public policy and religious activities, and training policymakers.
Capacity Development	Training scholars and community leaders in HR to strengthen their advocacy in supporting the integration of Islamic values and HR.	Organizing training courses, workshops, and ongoing learning programs for religious and local leaders.

Integrating Islamic principles with the universal HR framework is a complex effort that requires a structured and inclusive approach. This begins with strategies of dialogue and education, which are crucial foundations for bridging differences in understanding and practices (Harpur & Szucs, 2023). Interfaith dialogue and inclusive education aim to enhance mutual understanding of Islamic values and HR principles, creating a platform for rich and deep idea exchange. By developing curricula that integrate HR with Islamic teachings and organizing workshops and seminars, new horizons for broader understanding and greater tolerance can be opened.

Legal reform is also a critical aspect of this effort. Aligning Sharia law with international HR principles requires intensive engagement from scholars, legal experts, and policymakers (Siroj et al., 2023). It's not just about finding a middle ground between two different legal systems, but also about how these legal reforms can be accepted by the broader community without losing the essence of both sides. This reform process must be conducted carefully, ensuring that the laws produced are not only fair but also hold social and religious legitimacy. Navigating this challenge is complex due to varying global perspectives on Sharia and human rights, requiring nuanced dialogue and culturally sensitive adaptations to bridge differences while respecting diverse legal and ethical frameworks.

Strengthening national HR institutions with sensitivity to the Islamic context is the next important step (Esmail et al., 2023; Glušac, 2022). These institutions must be empowered to enhance the effectiveness of HR monitoring and implementation. This includes establishing institutions with a clear mandate, training competent staff, and providing adequate resources so they can act proactively and responsively to HR issues.

Another approach is building partnerships between HR organizations and the Muslim community. Such partnerships are essential for supporting local initiatives and HR advocacy, involving close cooperation between international and local HR organizations, Muslim communities, and religious institutions. These partnerships not only strengthen advocacy efforts but also have a broader impact on promoting and protecting HR (Abu-Nimer & Kadayifci, 2011; Garba, 2018).

Utilizing modern media and technology is vital in spreading information about the integration of Islam and HR. This strategy leverages social media, webinars, and online publications to reach a wider audience and provide easy access to relevant information, helping to change perceptions and raise public awareness. A rights-based approach in religious policy and practice also needs to be enforced. This involves integrating HR principles into public policy and religious activities, as well as training policymakers to ensure that the protection of individual rights is a top priority (de Beco, 2022; Gronholm et al., 2023). This approach emphasizes the importance of individual rights in social and spiritual development.

Finally, capacity building for scholars and community leaders in HR is essential. Through training, workshops, and ongoing education programs, they can be empowered to support the integration of Islamic values and HR. The skills acquired through these programs enable them to be effective advocates in supporting HR. These strategies, if applied effectively and consistently, can pave the way for a more inclusive society where Islamic principles and HR can complement each other within a framework of mutual respect and support. The success



of this integration will greatly depend on the continued commitment of all parties and open dialogue that facilitates the exchange of ideas and solutions.

## Discussion

In bridging the gap between Islamic theology and universally adopted human rights (HR) principles, a deep understanding of Islamic theological perspectives on HR is crucial. Islamic theology, with its diverse interpretations and applications, offers a rich framework for exploring and discussing fundamental human rights in light of authentic Islamic teachings (Abbasi & Mahmoodian, 2020).

One relevant theory in this context is the "Fiqh al-Aqalliyat" (Jurisprudence of Minorities), developed by contemporary scholars to assist Muslims living in non-Muslim countries to interact productively with predominantly non-Muslim societies (Yakar & Yakar, 2021). This theory encourages adaptation and flexibility in religious practice while holding onto core Islamic principles, in an effort to maintain religious identity while respecting and adhering to local laws and norms that do not conflict with Islamic values. An example of this is the adaptation of Islamic financial practices in non-Muslim countries, where traditional interest-based banking conflicts with Sharia law. To accommodate both local regulations and Islamic principles, financial institutions have developed Sharia-compliant products like interest-free loans and profit-sharing investment accounts.

Another pertinent theory is "Maqasid al-Shariah" (The Objectives of Sharia), which emphasizes the importance of protecting basic human interests including religion, life, intellect, progeny, and property (Fanshurna, 2022). According to this theory, all laws and practices in Islam should be directed to fulfil these five objectives, which are inherently aligned with many universal HR principles, such as the right to life, freedom of religion, and the right to personal security (Rofiq & Hasbi, 2022).

Utilizing the "Maqasid al-Shariah" framework can be highly effective in intercultural and interreligious dialogue as it offers a solid philosophical foundation for valuing and protecting human rights (Rahman & Anam, 2020). This approach not only demonstrates the compatibility between Islam and HR but also underscores how Islam proactively supports the protection of fundamental human rights.

Moreover, the application of "Fiqh al-Aqalliyat" provides pragmatic solutions for Muslims in the diaspora to interact with legal systems that may differ from Sharia law, without feeling that they must sacrifice their religious principles. This creates opportunities for Muslims to contribute positively to society while respecting HR principles, strengthening the case for integration and tolerance in pluralistic societies.

However, these theories also face criticism and challenges, particularly from quarters that view strict Sharia implementation as not always aligning with modern HR principles. For instance, issues regarding women's rights and punishments considered cruel by international standards often become points of contention. In this context, ongoing dialogue and education are key to seeking better understanding and more inclusive solutions.

The importance of education in informing and shaping Muslim views on HR cannot be underestimated (Herawati & Ermakov, 2022). Effective education should include critical analysis of religious texts as well as discussions on how these principles are translated in different legal and social contexts. This will help build a strong foundation from which Muslims worldwide can advocate for HR without feeling that it contradicts their faith.



International cooperation and academic exchange such as the collaboration between universities in Muslim-majority countries and Western institutions to host joint conferences and workshops on human rights, which foster mutual understanding and develop integrated approaches to human rights education and policy-making, are also vital in this process. Engaging scholars, HR experts, academics, and practitioners from various disciplines and backgrounds can enrich discussions and help identify practical solutions that respect the sovereignty of Islamic law while encouraging compliance with international HR standards (Appel, 2022; Runtunuwu & Tjahyadi, 2023). In a broader context, the role of international and regional organizations in supporting this dialogue is crucial. Organizations like the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation can act as mediators and facilitators in identifying and implementing best practices that respect religious and cultural diversity while advancing HR.

Therefore, approaching the differences between Islamic theology and HR principles from a perspective that values both sides and seeks common ground is essential. This strategy will not only strengthen the foundation for more inclusive HR but also allow Muslims to feel more integrated into global efforts to advance rights and justice for all.

In the narrative presented, the integrative approach to the theories of Maqasid al-Shariah and Fiqh al-Aqalliyat offers new insights in the study of Islam and human rights. By combining these two theoretical frameworks, the narrative highlights how Sharia principles can protect basic human interests and facilitate the adaptation of Islamic law in minority environments. This approach not only strengthens the argument that Islam supports universal HR principles but also outlines how Muslims in the diaspora can maintain their religious identity while respecting local laws. This presents a pragmatic solution that expands our understanding of the possibilities for harmonization between Sharia law and HR norms in various social and political contexts.

Furthermore, the narrative proposes innovative strategies for international cooperation and media use in supporting HR, reflecting the need for deep intercultural dialogue. The introduction of multidisciplinary education that integrates Islamic teachings with HR principles in curricula creates a foundation for a more inclusive and practical understanding of the coexistence of these two aspects. Additionally, leveraging social media and digital technologies for advocacy campaigns illustrates the use of modern tools to expand support and awareness regarding the integration of HR and Islamic values, demonstrating how technological innovation can strengthen global educational and advocacy efforts. An example of this is the use of platforms like Twitter and Facebook to launch campaigns that educate and engage the public on issues such as women's rights and religious freedom under Islamic law, allowing for widespread dissemination and interactive discourse across diverse global audiences.

### **Considering Sustainable Development Goals**

The integration of Islamic theological insights into the global human rights discourse aligns seamlessly with Indonesia's targeted Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 10, Reduced Inequalities, and Goal 5, Gender Equality. The discussion emphasizes how the principles derived from "Maqasid al-Shariah" and "Fiqh al-Aqalliyat" not only support the fundamental human rights inherent in these goals but also provide a methodological basis for addressing disparities and enhancing the role of women within Islamic contexts. This alignment suggests that Islamic legal and ethical frameworks can be instrumental in achieving these SDGs, as they promote equity and inclusion, which are essential for reducing the economic and social gaps within societies. By advocating for educational reforms, legal harmonization, and international cooperation, this discussion underlines the potential for a productive synergy





between Islamic teachings and universal human rights, contributing to a more just and balanced development.

This narrative underscores the profound potential of integrating Islamic theological principles in universal context with global human rights standards to create a more equitable world, as envisioned by the Sustainable Development Goals on reducing inequalities and achieving gender equality. The discussion has not only revealed the rich compatibility between Islamic values and universal human rights but also highlighted the practical pathways through which these principles can be actualized in Muslim societies and beyond. By fostering an inclusive dialogue that bridges theological rigor with human rights imperatives, and by leveraging modern technologies for broader educational and advocacy efforts, this approach promises to enhance the understanding and implementation of human rights in a way that respects religious traditions while promoting global justice and equality. Ultimately, this dynamic fusion of ideas and practices offers a hopeful vista for a world where respect for diversity and the dignity of all individuals form the cornerstone of development and peace.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that the Islamic theological approach to human rights offers a unique and vital framework in enriching the global discourse on HR. The integration of the principles of Maqasid al-Shariah and Fiqh al-Aqalliyat shows that Sharia law and HR norms can synergize, supporting the adaptation of Muslims in global contexts without sacrificing fundamental religious principles. This engagement affirms that Islam, through its theological sources, supports principles of justice, freedom, and dignity that are at the core of human rights, and provides a cohesive platform for deeper intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

As a recommendation, this study suggests enhancing cooperation among scholars, legal experts, and policymakers to deepen the integration of human rights principles in religious practices and national laws. There is also a need for the development of curricula that integrate Islamic teachings with HR principles and the use of digital media to increase awareness and education about HR in the Islamic context. This approach will not only strengthen dialogue between religious and secular communities but also promote greater understanding and tolerance, as well as enable more effective and inclusive implementation of HR across diverse societies.

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