



Islam and Cults: A Study of the Implementation of the Fatwa Policy of the Indonesian Ulema Council

Arief Marizki Purba*

Faculty of Political and Social Sciences
Universitas Sumatera Utara
Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara 20222, Indonesia
Corresponding Author: ariefmp@usu.ac.id
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4044-2519>

Nabila Fahira Nasution

Faculty of Political and Social Sciences
Universitas Sumatera Utara
Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara 20222, Indonesia
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0608-9734>

Immanuel Cristwo Bangun

Faculty of Political and Social Sciences
Universitas Sumatera Utara
Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara 20222, Indonesia
<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-9750-6638>



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Abstract

Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council serves as a decision to guide the implementation of Muslim religious worship in Indonesia. Problems that occur related to religious harmony are indications of cult practices in Indonesia. This research looks at Islam and Cults in Indonesia and the mechanism of the Indonesian Ulema Council's Fatwa policy towards the dissolution of cults. In addition, this study looks at the implications of the Fatwa Policy of the Indonesian Ulema Council on Muslim harmony. This research used a desk research approach through qualitative methods and aimed to identify objectives, select sources, collect data, and compile and analyse data to conclude. The results showed that MUI Fatwa plays an essential role in maintaining the order of religious life in Indonesia by determining the religious life of Muslims based on Islamic teachings. This includes determining the status of heretical groups, involving proper interpretive science, dissolving and stopping heretical activities, and cooperating with the government and religious leaders to protect the community. MUI's Fatwa has a positive impact on the eradication of cults based on a solid Islamic legal foundation, acting as a party that protects the community from deviant activities.

Keywords: Islam, cults, fatwa, policy, ulema.

Introduction

Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country with more than 207 million Muslims in Indonesia. However, Indonesia has several religions: Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The government recognises six official religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism (Haryanto, 2019). The diversity of beliefs in Indonesia often leads



to conflicts between religious communities, thus disrupting religious harmony, which is influenced by several things. The emergence of adherents who are not based on the ideology of Pancasila can trigger conflicts in spiritual connection in Indonesia (Banjanahor, 2021). Therefore, the Indonesian government formed the MUI as a foundation among Muslims in their economic, social, and political activities (Ode et al., 2023; Nasution et al., 2023).

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) is a non-governmental organisation that provides guidance and legal opinions, known as Fatwas, to the Muslim community in Indonesia. MUI's role is to assist the government in resolving Islamic issues, and its function is similar to that of an Ifta institution (Nisa et al., 2022). MUI is not a government institution and has no authority to enforce its Fatwa to the public. Still, MUI's Fatwa is considered an authoritative opinion on Islamic law. It is used as a reference for Muslims in Indonesia as the MUI Fatwa plays a role in maintaining religious harmony in Indonesia regarding the Fatwa on inter-religious harmony (Abdullah & Wijaya, 2016; Widigdo & Hamid, 2018). This Fatwa regulates the importance of preserving inter-religious harmony and guides Muslims' intolerance towards other religions. Although MUI issued this Fatwa, maintaining religious balance is not only MUI's responsibility but also the responsibility of all parties, including the government and society. Therefore, cooperation from all parties is needed to create harmonious religious harmony in Indonesia.

Fatwas issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) function as decisions or opinions given by experts on a particular issue and are used as guidelines for the implementation of religious worship by Muslims in Indonesia (Widigdo & Hamid, 2018). MUI has issued various Fatwas on various topics, one of which is the prohibition of the Ahmadiyah group. Ahmadiyah has been the subject of controversy and conflict in Indonesia, where it is considered to be a cult by some Muslims (Bonasir, 2018). Actions that are deemed sinful and the existence of cult activities that are supposed to deviate from the teachings of Islam, can trigger conflicts between religious communities in Indonesia. Therefore, MUI's Fatwa becomes an integral part of the legislation of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, guided by Pancasila, whose central provision is Belief in One God.

MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) Fatwa on cults in Indonesia has been issued since 1976 (Sajari, 2015). The Fatwa published by MUI in 2007 about ten criteria of cults, namely (1) Denying one of the pillars of faith, (2) Believing and following aqidah that is not by the shar'i arguments (Al-Qur'an and as Sunnah), (3) Believing in the revelation after the Qur'an, (4) Denying the authenticity and truth of the contents of the Qur'an, (5) Capturing the Qur'an that is not based on the rules of interpretation, (6) Denying the position of the hadith of the Prophet SAW as a source of Islamic teachings, (7) Insulting, harassing, and hiding the Prophets and Messengers, (8) Denying the Prophet Muhammad SAW as the last Prophet and Messenger, (9) Changing, adding, and reducing the points of worship that have been determined by Shari'ah, such as Hajj to the Temple, not five daily prayers, (10) Disbelieving fellow Muslims without Shar'i arguments, such as disbelieving Muslims just because they are not their group (Al Hamat, 2018; Andryanto, 2023). Every MUI Fatwa issued aims to prioritise human values and harmony and tolerance between religious communities in Indonesia (Sabri, 2018).

Literature Review

Religious Fatwa Policy

Studies on religious Fatwa policies can cover a wide range of topics, such as the role of Fatwas in contemporary society, the impact of Fatwas on policy implementation, and the authority of Fatwas in different contexts. A study conducted in Indonesia examines how the dynamics of state power and religious Fatwas in the digital age affect the adoption of COVID-19 policies in the



country (Ode et al., 2023). Another study conducted in Indonesia investigated Muslim attitudes and practices regarding the Indonesian Ulema Council's Fatwa on religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hanafi et al., 2023). An article published in the Oxford Journal of Law and Religion investigated Fatwas's role, demands and relevance in Australia (Whyte, 2022). A paper published in the Journal of the American Academy of Religion theorises the role of *iftā*, the Fatwa-making process, in forming Muslim societies (Awass, 2019).

An expert has explained that a Fatwa is not binding, and Muslims are not obliged to follow its lead. The power of a fatwa comes from the authority, trust, and respect of the institution or scholar that issued it (Renaud, 2022). An article published by Jeremy Menchik explores the impact of Fatwas on Indonesian politics. Menchik argues that contemporary Fatwas do not contain inbuilt authority or have inbuilt effects (Menchik, 2016; Menchik, 2022). Overall, a literature study on religious Fatwa policy can provide insights into the role of Fatwas in shaping policy and society, as well as the authority and impact of Fatwas in different contexts (Ode et al., 2023).

Religious Policy and Cults

Research on public policy for fostering religious activities and monitoring cults conducted by Winandi (2015) explains that the laws in Indonesia that regulate the religion and beliefs of its people are formal juridical but challenging to implement, and regulations governing freedom of religion in Indonesia are constantly evolving. This causes people who are vulnerable to the threat of violence from different beliefs to be challenging to reach. In addition, another research was conducted in West Aceh on government policies in anticipating cults and apostasy. The results of the study stated that countering cults and apostasy requires the role of the government. The government of West Aceh Indonesia issued a policy as an anticipation effort, namely fostering Aqidah, reviving Majilis Taklim, forming a forum for accelerating the enforcement of Islamic law, and designing *resam gampong*. These efforts involve the relevant government agencies and the community directly (Rizha, 2017).

Heresy in Indonesia is a theological or religious view or doctrine that prohibits or believes in things that are considered to oppose and contradict the beliefs, as well as the system of any religion that is considered orthodox or legitimately considered the correct teaching (Nasrudin, 2016). Nasution (2008) explains that the cause of the development of cults can come from external factors that come from the desire of other countries and disturb religious harmony and internal factors that arise from each religious group in Indonesia. Social forces influence the ongoing process towards the manifestation of an Islamic state or the so-called Islamisation process (Siddik, 2018). Heresy is listed in Islamic law as an act of blasphemy and gives birth to *Bid'ah* (new religious concerns that have no legal basis in Islam). The importance of understanding and interpretation of religion by scholars and religious groups as a force in shaping people's views on cults that can damage religious teachings. Heresy is a *Ta'zir* criminal offence (i.e. a criminal offence sanctioned by the government) (Ichsan & Prasetyoningsih, 2012).

MUI's fatwa is considered unable to resolve religious problems with claims of cults because it does not prioritise human values to create religious harmony (Ali Sabri, 2018). On the other hand, MUI has a dual role as an agent of modernisation and conservatism in the discourse of human rights. MUI's fatwa is adapted through human rights arguments about prohibiting religious activities that disturb public order (Mun'im, 2022). However, another study concluded that MUI's Fatwa seemed undemocratic towards other people's violations. One example is the fatwa calling for the criminalisation of blasphemy, which is seen as undemocratic because it potentially inhibits freedom of expression and religious pluralism (Ichwan, 2005). There are allegations of favouritism



from the government and courts in responding to the claims of minority (deviant) communities (Widyantoro, 2017).

Method Employed

This research uses a desk research approach through qualitative methods. Desk research is a popular choice for social humanities studies, as it is a cost-effective research method (Hoover Green & Cohen, 2021). Desk research, also known as secondary research, is a research method that involves using existing data. Desk research is based on materials published in reports and similar documents available in public libraries and websites and data obtained from surveys that have been conducted. Desk research is not about collecting data but reviewing previous research findings to gain a broad understanding of the field (Ortega-Gras, 2021).

Conducting desk research is an essential first step for at least three reasons: to gain a broad understanding of the field, to identify gaps in knowledge, and to identify potential sources of information. This research focuses on the Implications of the Fatwa Policy of the Indonesian Ulema Council Against Deviant Sects. The steps in this research were conducted by (1) identifying the topic and its purpose, then listing relevant research attributes. (2) Selecting the most relevant sources to the research topic. (3) Collecting data from existing documents, previous research, newspapers, magazines, and news broadcast on TV or radio. (4) Compiling and organising the data that has been collected and comparing it with other sources to identify trends and patterns. (5) Analyse the data to draw conclusions and insights about the case under study (Johnston, 2014; Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Results and Discussion

Implications of the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council on Cults in Indonesia

In the realm of religion in Indonesia, especially in the context of Islam, the presence of several cults has contributed to much public attention and triggered debates involving religious and government perspectives. This phenomenon is increasingly prominent along with the development of Islamic teachings and increasing public awareness of the teachings of Islam itself. The debates that arise cover theological issues and include aspects of security and public order (Hanafi, 2015; Siahaan & Untan, 2017). In addition, this attention does not only focus on cults but also cults based on Islamic teachings. Religious adherents in Indonesia are 87.2% Muslim, 7% Protestant, 2.9% Catholic, 1.7% Hindu, 0.73% Buddhist, 0.03% Confucian and 0.04% other (State.gov, 2022). As a religion embraced by the majority of people in Indonesia, this is a concern due to the emergence of various Islamic-based cults and groups that are considered to deviate from the teachings and legitimate interpretations of Islam. This development shows the complexity of the religious sphere, which not only involves conflicts between Islam and cults but also causes internal divisions in religious understanding and practice among Muslims that lead to blasphemy (Wulandari & Jovanly, 2022).

Therefore, the state plays a vital role as the entity responsible for maintaining the stability and welfare of religious communities. This is done by forming regulations governing religious life that ensure the comfort of practising religion and beliefs, including avoiding practices that indicate blasphemy or against religion (Wulandari & Jovanly, 2022). One concrete form of the state's commitment to protecting people's rights in religion can be seen through the drafting of Law Number 5 of 1969 concerning the prevention, abuse and blasphemy of religion in Indonesia as a form of legal protection and guarantee of the fundamental rights of citizens in obtaining equal treatment without discrimination as well as a legal instrument against cases that trigger conflicts or problems between religious adherents, one of which is about cults that have the potential to



disturb the peace of society. Specifically, in the realm of Islam, the government established the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) as an independent institution that accommodates Islamic scholars, *Zu'ama*, and scholars to guide, foster and protect Muslims in Indonesia (desa-sukadana.kuningankab.go.id, 2018; mui-lamandau.or.id, 2018). This institution has an important role and involvement in dealing with the eradication of heretical sects based on Islamic teachings by issuing *Fatwa* as an affirmation of the decision of these sects.

This cult's existence is considered a deviation from legitimate Islamic religious norms, and this assessment is followed by the decision of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) (Andryanto, 2021). The role of MUI as an authoritative institution that has the authority to take care of matters related to religious affairs issues provides guidance and confirmation of the heretical status of these sects through *Fatwa* (desa-sukadana.kuningankab.go.id, 2018). The *Fatwa* issued by MUI is descriptive and functions as a preventive step in dealing with the development of heretical sects in Indonesia. This step is taken to maintain religious stability which is important and prevent the spread of teachings considered heretical to maintain the sanctity of Islamic teachings in Indonesian society. The relationship between Islamic teachings and heretical sects involves normative judgement and preventive action while emphasising the critical role of MUI in protecting the integrity of Islamic teachings in Indonesia.

Therefore, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) decided on several legitimacy decisions on Islamic religious matters that can be used as a reference and indicator in assessing whether teaching is heretical or not; these indicators are summarised by Sajari (Sajari, 2015) into several indicators which include:

1. Denying the pillars of faith and Islam when teaching is considered to have denied one of the six pillars of faith or five pillars of Islam. This relates to the rejection of fundamental beliefs, such as not recognising the existence of Allah as God, angels, His books, and His messengers.
2. Believing in an *Aqidah* not by the Qur'an, where a sect is considered heretical if its beliefs contradict the *Aqidah* found in the Qur'an. This relates to the understanding, teaching, and interpretation of the teachings of Islam, which are considered to be out of line with, or not in line with, the principles contained in the Qur'an.
3. Believing in the Revelation after the Qur'an is where a sect believes in the existence of new revelations after the Qur'an is revealed. This is a misdirection because the Qur'an is the final perfection used as the leading guide of Islam. Therefore, rejection of the perfection of the Qur'an is considered a deviation of doctrine.
4. Denying the Truth of the Qur'an, namely a teaching, is considered heretical if it is considered to doubt or reject the truth of the validity of the Qur'an as a holy book and guidance for Muslims.
5. Interpreting the Qur'an based on something other than the Science of Interpretation, namely, if a sect has erred in interpreting the Qur'an without the basis of the correct science of interpretation. Misunderstanding the sacred text of the Qur'an can be considered a heretical act.
6. Denying the Prophet's Hadith as a source of Islamic teachings, that is, if a sect is identified as having rejected or doubted the position of the Prophet Muhammad's hadith as an absolute source of Islamic law. Rejection of the teachings from the Prophet can be indicated as a sign of heresy.
7. Insulting the Prophets and Messengers, namely if a sect is indicated to insult, harass or even denigrate the Prophets and Messengers, which is considered an attack on the sacred aspects of Islamic faith.
8. Denying the Prophet Muhammad SAW if a sect rejects the status of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as the last Prophet and apostle.



9. Changing the Principles of Worship by the Teachings of the Qur'an and As-Sunnah, namely if a teaching is considered to have substantially changed the principles of worship determined in the Qur'an and As-Sunnah. This change can be in the form of reducing or adding to the points of worship determined by Sharia so that it can lead to misguided religious practices.
10. Disbelieving fellow Muslims without Shar'i evidence, namely if teaching is considered to have declared the label of kafir to fellow Muslims without a clear and valid reason. Extreme judgement of fellow Muslims' beliefs can be considered a sign of intolerance and misguidance.

Of course, heretical sects wrapped in the foundation of Islam as their basis, have caused and become various sources of problems and chaos in the community. One example of a religious sect that caused problems in Indonesian society is the case of Taat Pribadi, also known as "*Dimas Kanjeng*", who led a sect in Probolinggo, East Java. Pribadi attracted many followers, including influential people, and eventually became embroiled in a scandal involving allegations of sexual abuse, drug use, and other criminal activities (Siregar, 2017). The diversity of cults that appear in the society inevitably creates confusion for the society. Therefore, to overcome this problem, MUI took the initiative by determining the steps in eradicating cults that deviate from Islamic teachings, as well as showing the seriousness of MUI in maintaining the stability of religious teachings and morality of Indonesian society. In determining and deciding these heretical sects, MUI compiled Fatwa as a decision interpretation about the problems that occur in the society based on the foundation of Islamic law to be used as a guide for life (Ijtihad) of the society (Saefuddin, 1996). In this context, those issues are related to sects considered heretical and misleading in Indonesia. This reflects MUI's effort to provide clear and authoritative guidance for Muslims in dealing with the phenomenon of cults in Indonesia. The author found some Fatwas that MUI has issued regarding these sects, which are decided to be heretical and misleading. It can be seen in Table 1.

Fatwa	Foundation Verse of the Qur'an	Directed Flow
MUI's 1994 Fatwa on Sects that Reject the Sunnah/Hadith of the Apostle	QS. al-Hasyr : 7 QS. AN-Nisa: 80 QS. Al-Imran: 31-32 QS. An-Nisa: 59 QS. An-Nisa: 65 QS. An-Nisa: 105 QS. An-Nisa: 150-151 QS. An-Nahl: 44	The sect that rejects the Sunnah / Hadith of the Apostle
MUI Fatwa No. 7/MUNAS VII/ MUI/ 11/ 2005 on Religious Pluralism, Liberalism and Secularism	QS. Ali Imran [3]: 85 QS. Ali Imran [3]: 19 QS. al-Kafirun [109] : 6 QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 36 S. al-Mumtahinah [60]: 8-9 QS. Al-Qashash [28]: 77 QS. Al-An'am [6]: 116 QS. al-Mu'minun [23]: 71	The School of Pluralism, Liberalism, and Secularism
MUI Fatwa Number 11/Munas VII/MUI/15/ 2005 About Ahmadiyah Sect	QS. al-Ahzab [33]: 40 QS. Al-An'am [6]: 153 QS. al-Ma'idah [5]: 105	Ahmadiyya sect
MUI Fatwa Number 4 Year 2007 About Al-Qiyadah Al-Islamiyah Sect	QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 40 QS. Al-An'am [6]: 153 QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 217 QS. An- Nisa [2]: 115 QS. Ali- Imran [3]: 32	Al-Qiyadah Al-Islamiyah Sect



MUI Fatwa Number 6 of 2016 on the Fajar Nusantara Movement (GAFATAR) sect	QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:131 QS. Ali Imran [3]:19 QS. Al-Nisa' [4]:125 QS. Ali 'Imran [3]:67 QS. Al- An'am [6]: 153 QS. Ali- Imran [3]: 32 QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 40 QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:42 QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 217 QS. Al-Anfaal [8]: 38 QS. Al-Tahrim[66]:8 QS. Al-Nisa[4]:17 QS. Al-Anfaal [9]:11	The flow of the Fajar Nusantara Movement (GAFATAR)
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Table 1. MUI Fatwa on Cults in Indonesia
 Source: MUI Digital, managed by the author, 2023

Based on what is presented in Table.1, it shows that heretical sects in Indonesia appear with various perspectives; these perspectives include ideologies that are formed and created in the community, either based on Islamic teachings or Western ideologies, which create an apostasy to the legitimate teachings of Islam by the Qur'an and Hadith. The emergence of Fatwas compiled and determined by MUI is a preventive step in stopping and eradicating the movement of sects that are considered heretical that massively developed in Indonesia. Fatwa is not just a decision made by MUI as a standard rule that regulates Islamic teachings, but Fatwa is advice, counsel or answers to questions related to the law in Islamic teachings (Suhadak, 2013). In this context, the Fatwa issued by MUI regarding the cult is an implication given by MUI in answering the phenomenon of the cult that causes confusion and discomfort among Muslims regarding the impact of the development of the cult in Indonesia, which is considered to disturb the creed of Islam. On the other hand, it has become a shared awareness that leaving the problem without any answer and letting the ummah (Muslims) in confusion cannot be justified, either l'tiqadi or syar'i (Suhadak, 2013).

Therefore, MUI, through its Fatwa decision on cults, has given implications in the effort to eradicate the cults in Indonesia. The implication can be seen in Table 2, which presents the explanation related to the involvement of MUI's Fatwa in influencing the development of heretical sects in Indonesia.

Fatwa	Implications
MUI's 1994 Fatwa on Sects that Reject the Sunnah/Hadith of the Apostle	Through the Fatwa issued, MUI asserted that the sects that reject the Sunnah/Hadith of the Apostle: 1. Those who do not believe in the hadith of Muhammad as the source of Islamic law are heretical and misleading and outside the teachings of Islam. 2. Anyone who consciously or unconsciously has followed this sect should immediately repent and return to the proper teachings of Islam. 3. Expect the Ulama to provide guidance and instructions for those who repent and ask the government to take firm action in the form of a ban on the sect that does not believe in the Hadith of Muhammad SAW as a source of Islamic Shari'a.
MUI Fatwa No. 7/MUNAS VII/ MUI/ 11/ 2005 on Religious Pluralism, Liberalism and Secularism	Through the Fatwa issued, MUI asserted that the flow of Pluralism, Liberalism and Religious Secularism: 1. Pluralism, secularism and religious liberalism as intended are contrary to the teachings of Islam. Religious pluralism is a teaching that considers that all religious teachings are the same and the truth of each religion is relative so that every religious adherent should not claim if his religion is the true religion not with other religions. In terms of religious liberalism, namely understanding religious texts (Al-Qur'an & Sunnah) by using free reason; and only accepting religious doctrines that are in accordance with reason alone. Furthermore,



	<p>religious secularism is an effort to separate world affairs from religion where religion is only used to regulate personal affairs with God, while human relations are regulated only based on social agreements.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Muslims are forbidden to follow pluralism, secularism and religious liberalism which in Aqidah and worship Muslims must be exclusive, in the sense that it is forbidden to mix the Aqidah and worship of Muslims with the Aqidah and worship of other religions. 3. For Muslim communities who live with adherents of other religions (religious plurality), in social issues that are not related to aqidah and worship, Muslims are inclusive, in the sense that they continue to socialise with adherents of other religions as long as they do not harm each other.
MUI Fatwa Number 11/Munas VII/MUI/15/ 2005 About Ahmadiyah Sect	<p>Through the Fatwa issued, MUI asserted that the Ahmadiyah sect:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is a group outside of Islam, has the status of heresy and misleading and people who follow it are Murtad. 2. With the law of apostasy, anyone who has already followed this sect is obliged to return to the legitimate teachings of Islam in line with the Qur'an and Hadith. 3. It is forbidden to run this sect in Indonesia, besides that the parties who have the authority in the execution of stopping this group are the Government always Uuil Amri.
MUI Fatwa Number 4 Year 2007 About Al-Qiyadah Al-Islamiyah Sect	<p>Through its Fatwa, MUI affirmed that the Al-Qiyadah Al-Islamiyah sect:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The teaching of al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah is heretical and misleading and is outside Islam, and people who follow the teachings are apostates (out of Islam); because in the teachings of the sect believe in the existence of a new creed which reads, "Ashhadu alla ilaha illa Allah wa ashhadu anna still al- Mau'ud Rasul Allah", besides that it believes in the existence of a new prophet.rasul after the Prophet Muhammad SAW and has not required prayer, fasting and hajj which is contrary to the teachings of Islam. 2. That this teaching is a teaching that is heretical and misleading and is outside of Islam, and people who follow these teachings are apostates (out of Islam) so that anyone who has already followed this teaching is obliged to repent and immediately return to the teachings of Islam (al-ruju' ila al-haq), the teachings of the al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah sect have been proven to tarnish and pollute the religion of Islam because they teach deviant teachings in the name of Islam. 3. The government is obliged to prohibit the spread of this understanding and teaching as well as close all access to activities and take firm action against the leaders of the sect in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
MUI Fatwa Number 6 of 2016 on the Fajar Nusantara Movement (GAFATAR) sect	<p>Through the Fatwa issued, MUI asserted that the Fajar Nusantara Movement sect:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This sect is a religious sect that places Ahmad Moshaddeq as a Spiritual Teacher by believing and teaching teachings including the existence of a messenger from God Almighty, as messiah and saviour, namely Ahmad Moshaddeq alias Abdus Salam Messi who is essentially a prophet after the prophet Muhammad SAW. In addition, it has not required five daily prayers, Ramadan fasting, and Hajj and mixes the teachings of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism by interpreting verses of the Qur'an not in accordance with the rules of interpretation. This sect also created a new creed that reads, "Ashhadu alla ilaha illa Allah wa ashhadu anna still al- Mau'ud Rasul Allah" and believes in the presence of a new prophet / messenger after the Prophet Muhammad SAW. 2. Anyone who follows this sect is categorised as an apostate and must repent. In addition, for those who only follow the social activities of the GAFATAR community but do not believe in its teachings, are not Murtad but must leave this community. 3. The government is obliged to carry out continuous rehabilitation and guidance for followers, members and administrators of former GAFATAR.

Table 2. Implication of MUI Fatwa on cults in Indonesia
 Source: MUI Fatwa, managed by the author, 2023

The implication of Fatwa on cults is expected to be able to give direction and certainty to the society, especially Muslims, in facing the phenomenon of the development of cults that occur in Indonesia. The involvement of MUI as an institution that has authority in issuing Fatwa is one of the forms of participation expected to maintain the stability, security, and comfort of the community in practising their religion. MUI's Fatwa on cults has implications in matters related to (i) Giving



decisions on whether the groups that allegedly conduct religious activities are heretical and misleading by previously doing deepening on those cult groups; (ii) Framing the decision based on proper interpretation science through the support of Al-Qur'an and Hadith verses as the umbrella of Islamic law; (iii) Having the authority to dissolve as well as stop the heretical activities carried out by these groups and (iv) Requesting assistance from the government to provide opportunities for members of these heretical groups to return to the legitimate path of Islam by the Qur'an and Hadith and get protection from the Ulama to provide guidance and instructions for those who repent and ask the government to take action in the form of a strict prohibition to carry out activities that are considered heretical and misleading.

Through the issuance of this Fatwa on cults, it is hoped that Muslims will no longer feel anxious, afraid or worried about deviant teachings that harm society. On the contrary, this Fatwa is expected to provide a solid and clear foundation regarding Islam's genuine and legitimate teachings through the Qur'an and Hadith so that people can confidently practice their religion without being influenced by heretical sects that can mislead. Thus, the implication of this Fatwa is not only a guide but also an effort to maintain the integrity and stability of the Muslim community in Indonesia.

MUI's role in eradicating cults in Indonesia

The development of Islamic teachings not only includes aspects related to theological and spiritual aspects but also involves complex dynamics in dealing with cults (Ichsan & Prasetyoningsih, 2012; Zuchairiyah, 2012). MUI, as an institution that has authority and religious authority, plays a crucial role in maintaining the integrity of Islamic teachings and protecting Muslims from the influence of cults that indicate damage to the order of religious life. MUI itself has delivered Fatwas to deal with religious groups that are considered deviant and have determined that these groups are heretical and urged people who have fallen into these groups to return to the actual teachings of Islam (Ichsan & Prasetyoningsih, 2012). However, enforcing and stipulating these Fatwas also faces challenges as some followers of these sects remain determined to continue their activities on the grounds that freedom of belief is protected by Indonesian law (Ichsan & Prasetyoningsih, 2012).

In exercising its authority, MUI is strengthened by the presence of ulama, Zu'ama, and Islamic scholars who jointly guide, foster and nurture Muslims in Indonesia. MUI members' diversity of backgrounds and expertise creates a synergy that combines spiritual, scientific and leadership aspects. This is also in line with the role of MUI in tackling issues that are considered to interfere with the validity of Islamic teachings, including dealing with heretical sects that can destroy the sacredness of Islam amid the diversity of Indonesian society (Zuchairiyah, 2012). The role of MUI is not only limited to the spiritual dimension but also includes the legal and regulatory dimensions. MUI, composed of scholars, has a significant role in providing spiritual guidance and compiling and formulating religious rules through the issuance of Fatwa. The Fatwa is not only used as a spiritual guide but is an instrument that aims to determine the religious life of Muslims (Putri, 2018).

Therefore, MUI determines the steps to take action against religious sects that are suspected of deviating and can cause chaos in the community. This action is proven necessary when the emergence of the sect has approached a level that can threaten the stability and peace of society. MUI refers to the Secretary General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs circular letter number SJ/B.V/HK.00/71.08/2014, which provides guidelines for handling problematic religious sects and movements in Indonesia. Some points in the guidelines include:



1. Resolve the problem of new and problematic religious sects and movements in more humane, fair and in civilised ways. This shows that MUI does not only focus on the law, but desired effects can be achieved through dialogue, mediation, and respect for the dignity of each individual.
2. Strengthening the function of religion in developing full human potential, which also reflects the religious understanding that makes a positive contribution. Through this step, MUI not only sees the cult as a threat but also as an opportunity to strengthen the role of religion and form a complete and qualified human being.
3. Facilitating the settlement between those considered deviant and heretical sects and the mainstream religious community through peaceful means and democratic communication. This shows that MUI is committed to creating space for dialogue and negotiation in resolving conflicts without involving confrontational and repressive actions.

In addition, as part of the preventive efforts to inhibit the development of heretical sects in Indonesia, MUI conducts a series of methods that are expected to eradicate heretical sects effectively. The preventive measures taken by MUI include various proactive methods and approaches (Muksin, 2016), which aims to prevent people from being affected by heretical teachings that can damage the stability of religious life. Some of the methods applied by MUI in this context include:

1. MUI endeavours to reinforce the cults suspected to be heretical through strict supervision, which is in cooperation with the surrounding community; every report given by the surrounding community will be followed up immediately to narrow the movement of groups suspected of carrying out heretical activities.
2. MUI establishes partnerships with the community, aiming to anticipate the development of religious sects. This collaboration is related to communication through religious dialogue between MUI and the community, which also involves religious leaders, community leaders and the government. Hopefully, this collaboration can give special attention to the Muslim community in anticipating teachings not by Islamic principles and maintaining inter-religious harmony.
3. MUI and the government form rules related to religious activities, such as establishing houses of worship, religious broadcasting, celebration of religious holidays, and blasphemy that can cause conflict and vulnerability in religious harmony.
4. MUI supervises the process of religious learning and books taught in schools. This ensures no deviation from Islamic law in the learning and teaching process.
5. MUI, together with the government, conducts socialisation through da'wah activities related to the themes of cults, especially Tawhid so that people can respond if they see irregularities in the teachings in their environment.
6. MUI keeps updating the data about the kinds of religious sects; this is needed because not all people know the kinds of religious sects, especially people who do not fully understand Islam.

Thus, MUI, through its role and authority, tries to do preventive action as a tangible manifestation of commitment to maintaining religious comfort and stability in Indonesia. Through these efforts, it is hoped that it can prevent people from being influenced by heretical teachings that can later damage the harmony and order of religious life. All of these actions reflect MUI's dedication to maintaining the integrity of Islamic teachings by the Qur'an and Hadith and ensuring that people can live in harmony and be calm without being concerned about deviant religious teachings that may adversely impact on their lives and unsettle their faith.



Conclusion

The implication of MUI Fatwa on heretical sects that develop in Indonesia can be considered an active step in maintaining the order of religious life. The preparation and formulation of religious rules through the issuance of Fatwa is not only used as a spiritual guide but is an instrument that aims to determine how the religious life of Muslims based on Islamic teachings by the Qur'an and Hadith, including avoiding deviations of teachings that are not by Islamic principles. The implication of MUI's Fatwa towards eradicating heresy in Indonesia includes several aspects.

1. Giving decisions on the status of heresy to a group,
2. Involving the proper science of interpretation in assessing the group that is considered heretical through the support of the Qur'an and Hadith as a strong umbrella of Islamic law,
3. It has the authority to dissolve and stop heretical and misleading activities and
4. It cooperates with the government and religious leaders in protecting the community to avoid heretical activities and take firm action in the form of prohibition to carry out activities considered heretical and misleading.

Overall, MUI Fatwa has a positive impact on the eradication of cults based on a solid Islamic legal foundation and plays the proper role as a party that has the authority to protect the community from deviant activities such as cult activities.

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