

THE CONCEPT OF ISLAMIC POLITICS IN THE MEDINA PERIOD AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THE UPHOLDING OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE INDONESIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

This study analyzes the concept of Islamic politics during the Medina period and its relevance to strengthening human rights enforcement within the Indonesian political system. It employs a qualitative literature-based approach combining historical-normative analysis, integrative textual analysis, and comparative interpretation. The sources include the Medina Charter, classical Islamic political literature, national regulations, human rights institutional reports, and contemporary studies on Indonesian politics and human rights. The findings show that Medina politics embodied social contractualism, substantive justice, legal equality, minority protection, social pluralism, community participation, and leadership ethics grounded in public responsibility. These principles are normatively compatible with a democratic rule-of-law framework and may enrich human rights protection in Indonesia by strengthening accountability, protecting vulnerable groups, encouraging nondiscriminatory legislation, and expanding citizen participation. The study concludes that the contemporary relevance of Medina politics lies not in reproducing its historical institutions, but in contextually adapting its ethical principles within a pluralistic constitutional democracy committed to human dignity.

Keywords: Medina Politics; Human Rights; Substantive Justice; Minority Protection; Leadership Ethics

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis konsep politik Islam pada periode Madinah serta relevansinya terhadap penguatan penegakan hak asasi manusia dalam sistem politik Indonesia. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan analisis historis-normatif, analisis tekstual integratif, dan pendekatan komparatif. Sumber data meliputi Piagam Madinah, literatur politik Islam klasik, regulasi nasional, laporan lembaga hak asasi manusia, serta kajian kontemporer mengenai politik dan HAM di Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa politik Madinah mengandung prinsip kontraktualisme sosial, keadilan substantif, kesetaraan hukum, perlindungan minoritas, pluralisme sosial, partisipasi komunitas, serta etika kepemimpinan yang berorientasi pada tanggung jawab publik. Prinsip-prinsip tersebut memiliki kompatibilitas normatif dengan kerangka negara hukum demokratis dan dapat memperkaya penguatan HAM di Indonesia melalui peningkatan akuntabilitas kekuasaan, perlindungan kelompok rentan, legislasi nondiskriminatif, dan perluasan partisipasi politik warga. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa relevansi politik Madinah terletak pada adaptasi nilai etiknya, bukan reproduksi institusionalnya, dalam konteks negara modern yang pluralistik serta berlandaskan konstitusi, demokrasi, dan penghormatan terhadap martabat manusia.

Kata Kunci: Politik Madinah; Hak Asasi Manusia; Keadilan Substantif; Perlindungan Minoritas; Etika Kepemimpinan



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INTRODUCTION

The political ideas of Islam during the Medina period often serve as conceptual references in studies of the relationship between religious values, power structures, and respect for human dignity.¹ The transformation of Arab society into an organized political community under the Charter of Medina shows how religious norms were integrated with contractual principles, equality between citizens, and protection of minority groups.² Contemporary phenomena in Indonesia show that the challenges to upholding human rights are still strong, as reflected in the National Commission on Human Rights report which records an increase in public complaints every year. regarding violations of civil and political rights, as well as the right to security.³ This fact demonstrates the need for a comprehensive approach that not only relies on a positive legal framework, but also takes into account local values, religious traditions, and intellectual heritage that can strengthen the ethical and moral commitment of state administrators.

The relevance of Islamic politics during the Medina period is interesting to study because it presented a model of government that emphasized social covenants, the distribution of substantive justice, and peace-oriented conflict resolution mechanisms. The Medina Charter is one historical document that demonstrates a political construction based on cross-ethnic and interfaith agreements.⁴ Indonesia's condition as a pluralistic nation with a constitutional foundation that upholds humanity and social justice shows that there are common ground that can be explored academically.⁵ The strong religious moral aspirations and the high level of public trust in religious institutions make Medina's political values relevant as a basis for philosophical and ethical reflection in responding to contemporary human rights problems, especially when formal frameworks have not been fully effective in addressing structural violence and inequality in access to justice.

Scholarly studies of Medina's politics have developed quite extensively. Research by Ali and Abdollahi shows that Medina's socio-political structure reflected a transformation from a tribal community to a moral community based on collective agreement, thus opening up

¹ Arifinsyah et al., "Islamic Theological Perspectives on Human Rights: Bridging the Gap between Faith and Universal Principles," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 106, no. 2 (2025): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.106.207>.

² Kuntres Nasution, "Negara Madinah Sebagai Cerminan Awal Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Konstitusional Dalam Bingkai Pancasila," *Kamali: Jurnal Ilmu Agama* 1, no. 1 (2025): 1–18.

³ Rini Fitria Morfi et al., "Efektifitas Pemberian Hasil Rekomendasi Penyelidikan Komnas HAM Terhadap Dugaan Pelanggaran HAM Kepada Lembaga Negara," *Lareh Law Review* 1, no. 1 (2023): 34–46, <https://doi.org/10.25077/llr.1.1.34-46.2023>.

⁴ Nasution, "Negara Madinah Sebagai Cerminan Awal Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Konstitusional Dalam Bingkai Pancasila."

⁵ Setia Gumilar et al., "Political Opposition in Islamic Political Perspective," *Russian Law Journal* 11, no. 3 (2023): 43–52, <https://doi.org/10.52783/rlj.v11i3s.735>.

opportunities for the principles of equal citizenship.⁶ The study by Embong, Mohamed, Muslim, and Akhir emphasized that the Medina Charter contains proto-constitutional elements that regulate inter-community relations in an egalitarian manner.⁷ Sijuwade's analysis explains that the early Islamic community was oriented towards the values of the "believers' movement" which were inclusive of various religious groups, thus providing space for pluralistic interpretations of freedom of belief.⁸ Research by Arifinsyah et al. highlights the need for a contextual reading of the Islamic political heritage in order to find substantive common ground between Islamic moral principles and modern human rights.⁹ Meanwhile, Nasution's study offers the perspective that Medina's political values can serve as an ethical framework for strengthening the principles of deliberation, justice, and public participation in contemporary society.¹⁰ The existence of these studies shows that Medina politics is a rich topic, but there is still room for presenting a more focused analysis on its relevance to the empirical debate on human rights.

The fundamental questions to be answered through this research are: what is the main character of Islamic politics during the Medina period as an early socio-political system that integrates religious values and social contracts; what are the conditions and challenges of human rights enforcement in Indonesia; and how can Medina's political values be used as a reflective framework to strengthen human rights enforcement policies and practices in Indonesia? These questions are combined with the research objectives, namely to compile a historical-normative analysis of Medina's politics, critically examine the quality of human rights enforcement in Indonesia, and formulate the conceptual relevance between the two to offer a model for strengthening political ethics that is contextual and responsive to the needs of modern governance. The initial argument underlying this research is based on the assumption that the normative values implemented by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina demonstrate a strong commitment to the protection of justice, equality of citizenship, and non-discriminatory conflict resolution mechanisms. This research ultimately seeks to offer a conceptual framework that emphasizes that the enforcement of human rights requires not only legal instruments but also a strong moral

⁶ Ishraq Ali and Mohammad E. Abdollahi, "Divine Traditions and the Governance of the City-State of Medina," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 80, no. 3 (2024): a10094, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i3.10094>.

⁷ Zaleha Embong et al., "Principle of Responsibility in the Medina Charter to Build Cooperative Relations of the Cross-Cultural Community," *Islamiyyat* 45, no. 1 (2023): 173–80, <https://doi.org/10.17576/islamiyyat-2023-4501-15>.

⁸ Joshua R. Sijuwade, "Islam and the Pan-Abrahamic Problem," *Religion* 16, no. 1 (2025): 51, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16010051>.

⁹ Arifinsyah et al., "Islamic Theological Perspectives on Human Rights: Bridging the Gap between Faith and Universal Principles."

¹⁰ Nasution, "Negara Madinah Sebagai Cerminan Awal Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Konstitusional Dalam Bingkai Pancasila."

foundation as exemplified in Medina's politics as a model of ethical leadership and governance in a pluralistic society.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research method uses a qualitative approach based on historical-normative analysis enriched with systematic integrative textual analysis techniques to examine the concept of Islamic politics during the Medina period and its relevance to the enforcement of human rights in the Indonesian political system. Data sources consist of primary literature in the form of the Medina Charter, as well as classic Islamic political texts, and secondary literature in the form of contemporary research results, reports from human rights institutions, and national regulations governing human rights protection. Data collection was carried out through three systematic stages: a directed source search with authoritative selection criteria, extraction of political concepts and human rights norms from each source, and cross-verification between texts to ensure consistency of meaning and context. Data analysis was carried out through the steps of thematic codification of the concept of Medina politics, mapping its principles into categories of human rights protection values, and comparative synthesis between textual findings with the legal framework and Indonesian political practices, accompanied by contextual hermeneutic interpretation to assess the relevance of these values to the dynamics of human rights enforcement. This analytical approach provides a working structure that allows for a conceptual relationship between Medina politics and the system. Indonesian politics is analyzed in more depth and measurably without relying on field data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual Foundations of Islamic Politics in the Medina Period

The conceptual construction of Islamic politics during the Medinan period was rooted in a configuration of prophetic leadership that gained legitimacy through both the community's moral acceptance and the authority of revelation. Montgomery Watt asserted that the legitimacy of the Prophet Muhammad rested on the Medinan community's collective belief in his prophetic capacity, which provided an ethical foundation for organizing public life.¹¹ This framework of legitimacy is neither coercive nor based on formal power structures, but rather takes the form of normative legitimacy that combines personal credibility, integrity of character, and the theological convictions of the community. Fazlur Rahman describes prophetic legitimacy as a transformational authority that aims to shape the horizon of public values through the

¹¹ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford University Press, 1956), 71.

internalization of justice, moral responsibility, and loyalty to the principle of societal unity.¹² This kind of legitimacy orientation builds the foundation that the political leadership of Medina is not built on a power contract in a legalistic sense, but rather on a value relationship between the leader figure and the community that recognizes his ethical qualities and pedagogical function.

The basic structure of Medina's political authority developed as an expression of normative values that placed the Prophet as the center of moral interpretation and the guardian of the integrity of the collective order.¹³ Harun Nasution stated that the Prophet's authority was characterized by dual authority: spiritual authority, guiding the transcendental dimension of society, and ethical authority, directing the orientation of socio-political action. These two realms did not constitute a dualism of power, but rather a syncretization of roles, establishing that Medina's political authority aimed to maintain the moral integrity of the community.¹⁴ Marshall Hodgson emphasized that the Prophet's authority cannot be understood as administrative, as the Medina governmental structure did not yet have an established institutional hierarchy. Rather, this authority was educational, establishing a framework of values that connected the spiritual dimension of society with social practices oriented toward justice and mutual benefit.¹⁵ Therefore, the structure of Medina's political authority is normative, not legal-bureaucratic, so that its main emphasis is on providing value direction for the community, not technical arrangements of a procedural nature.

Community participation patterns played a fundamental role in shaping Medina's political concepts, as the city's social structure still operated through tribal networks and collective solidarity. Patricia Crone argues that Medina's response to the Prophet's leadership was shaped by patterns of social engagement based on a sense of community, shared responsibility for the stability of collective values.¹⁶ This participation was deliberative in the form of moral agreement, not electoral or representational participation like modern political systems. Abdullah Saeed explained that the people of Medina interpreted political involvement as an ethical obligation to maintain the integrity of the community through a commitment to the principles of monotheism, justice, and public trust.¹⁷ This involvement reflects a high-value participation model because it is not oriented towards the distribution of power, but towards a collective willingness to internalize the moral values that underlie a shared way of life.

¹² Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), 121.

¹³ Dikdik Dahlan Lukman, "Madinah Sebagai Cikal Bakal Negara Berbasis Good Governance," *Khatulistiwa: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Sosial Humaniora* 5, no. 1 (2025): 26–37, <https://doi.org/10.55606/khatulistiwa.v5i1.5677>.

¹⁴ Harun Nasution, *Islam Ditinjau Dari Berbagai Aspeknya* (UI Press, 1985), 94.

¹⁵ Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (University of Chicago Press, 2002), 49.

¹⁶ Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Gorgias Press, 2004), 99.

¹⁷ Abdullah Saeed, *Islamic Thought: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2006), 114.

The normative nature of Medina's government reflected a value orientation that positioned politics as an instrument for shaping social ethics, rather than an institutional system modeled on the modern state. Muhammad Iqbal emphasized that prophetic politics served to uphold creative ethical ideals, rather than to establish static administrative structures.¹⁸ This framework is in line with Rashid Rida's view that sees the Medina model as a value reference, namely a model that provides moral principles for institutional development but does not standardize a particular institutional format.¹⁹ This conception implies that the Medinan government is more accurately understood as an ethical paradigm expressing principles of justice, humanity, and leadership oriented toward fostering community morality. This model of values is flexible and adaptive because it is not bound by rigid structural constructs. Abdelwahab El-Affendi asserts that the dynamics of the Medinan government actually demonstrate that Islam provides a broad normative framework for political practice, but does not prescribe institutional formulas that must be applied literally in different historical contexts.²⁰

This conceptual argument demonstrates that the foundation of Islamic politics during the Medina period rested on a continuum of values that integrated the moral legitimacy of leaders, ethical authority, community participation, and the normative orientation of government. This basic political structure resembled neither a theocratic state nor an administrative government, but rather a value construct that guided society to transform the principles of justice, responsibility, and reciprocity into socio-political practices. Karen Armstrong emphasizes that Medina's success as a political community lay in the Prophet's ability to construct a moral vision that fostered a shared ethical awareness, not in the creation of a permanent governmental structure.²¹ Therefore, the conceptual foundation of Medina politics is a relevant intellectual model as a value reference for contemporary Islamic political discourse without needing to be reduced to a technical pattern or institutional blueprint.

Principles of Human Rights Protection in the Medina Political System

The structure of the Medina Charter demonstrates that the protection of human rights was deeply rooted in the legal apparatus of the early Muslim community, as Hamidullah asserts, viewing the charter as the first written constitution establishing the principles of liberty, justice, and collective security.²² Freedom of religion gains explicit legitimacy through the recognition of

¹⁸ Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1930), 75.

¹⁹ Rashid Rida, *Al-Khilāfah Aw al-Imāmah al-‘Uzma* (Maktabah al-Qāhira, 1923), 244.

²⁰ Abdelwahab El-Affendi, *Who Needs an Islamic State?* (London Academic Press, 1991), 151.

²¹ Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time* (HarperCollins, 2006), 56.

²² Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Emergence of Islam* (Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1993), 92.

the autonomy of religious communities, as each group is guaranteed to maintain its teachings, rituals, and internal structures without interference from political authorities. Watt argues that the Prophet's leadership did not demand theological homogeneity or the imposition of beliefs, but rather guaranteed social space for religious plurality as a foundation for political stability.²³ This principle has a strong resonance with the contemporary concept of religious freedom which places the autonomy of individuals and communities in determining their belief systems as a basic right that cannot be reduced by the state Rasyid et al.,²⁴ so that the normative implementation of the charter confirms the existence of a mechanism for respecting conscience-based freedom as described by John Rawls in a modern liberal framework.²⁵

The structure of guarantees of security of life and property shows that the charter regulates comprehensive protection of physical integrity and ownership, as stated by Fazlur Rahman who assessed that the Medina community was built on the principle of inviolability which places the loss of life and the seizure of property as serious violations of the social order.²⁶ The Prophet's policy affirmed that every citizen, regardless of ethnicity or religious affiliation, enjoys equal legal protection against violence, intimidation, and aggression. An-Na'im points out that this concept aligns with modern human rights standards regarding the right to life and the right to property, as enshrined in international instruments such as the UDHR.²⁷ The implementation of the charter also emphasizes that security is not merely a matter of physical protection, but an integral part of guaranteeing human dignity that enables people to carry out social, economic, and spiritual activities with dignity without structural threats.²⁸

The framework of equality before the law is reflected in the charter's provisions, which eliminate the supremacy of lineage, tribal status, or economic status as the basis for legal treatment. Crone emphasized that the Prophet's practice placed the rule of law as the primary principle binding the entire political community through standards of substantive justice, not group privilege. Dispute resolution mechanisms in the Medina community requires that every party submit to objective norms of justice, so that political authority does not function as an entity

²³ Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 203.

²⁴ Maryam Rasyid et al., "Kebebasan Beragama Dan Hak Asasi Manusia: Studi Komparatif Ajaran Islam, Kristen, Dan Hindu," *Kamali: Jurnal Ilmu Agama* 1, no. 2 (2025): 129–43, <https://doi.org/10.64691/qgwaah90>.

²⁵ Edor J. Edor, "John Rawls's Concept of Justice as Fairness," *PINISI Discretion Review* 4, no. 1 (2020): 179–90, <https://doi.org/10.26858/pdr.v4i1.16387>.

²⁶ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (The University of Chicago, 1982), 76.

²⁷ Abdullahi Ahmed An Na'im, *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law* (Syracuse University Press, 1996), 27.

²⁸ Nasution, "Negara Madinah Sebagai Cerminan Awal Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Konstitusional Dalam Bingkai Pancasila."

that monopolizes the truth, but rather as a guarantor of procedural fairness.²⁹ This equality is in line with contemporary human rights ideas regarding non-discrimination and equality before the law and emphasizes that political legitimacy depends on the state's ability to guarantee access to justice without primordial bias.³⁰ The findings of Ridwan, Umar, and Harun reinforce that legal equality in the charter forms a social ethos that rejects artificial hierarchies, so that the construction of justice becomes the foundation for socio-political cohesion.³¹

Minority protection gained strong articulation through the recognition of the collective rights of the Jewish community and other non-Muslim groups as an integral part of the political community of Medina. Peters shows that the charter affirmed the preservation of the identity, internal legal structure, and social autonomy of minority groups without assimilative pressure. The Prophet's leadership demonstrated a governance model that prioritized ensuring the continuity of the traditions and culture of communities that were theologically distinct from the majority population, thus establishing socio-political relations based on the principles of mutual security and non-aggression.³² This concept is in line with Kymlicka's thinking on group rights in a plural society, because the protection of minorities is seen as a fundamental element for political stability and a prerequisite for respect for human dignity.³³ The congruence between the Prophet's practice and contemporary theories on minority rights confirms that pluralism is not merely passive tolerance, but rather the normative empowerment of vulnerable groups so that they do not become victims of majoritarian dominance.

The accountability of political authority is reflected in the Prophet's practice of positioning leadership as a public trust bound by the values of justice, moral transparency, and commitment to the collective interest. Arkoun emphasized that the Prophet's leadership model rejected absolutism, requiring every political decision to be ethically and rationally accountable to the public.³⁴ The deliberation mechanism shows that authority does not operate unilaterally, but rather involves social participation as the basis for policy legitimacy.³⁵ This concept is in

²⁹ Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*, 133.

³⁰ Aris Trantidis, "Progressive Constitutional Deliberation: Political Equality, Social Inequalities and Democracy's Legitimacy Challenge," *Politics* 44, no. 3 (2022): 453–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02633957221074899>.

³¹ Muannif Ridwan et al., "Study on Human Rights Principles in The Medina Charter and Its Implementation In Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Social Science Research* 2, no. 2 (2021): 52–64, <https://doi.org/10.11594/10.11594/ijssr.02.02.01>.

³² Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History* (Mouton, 1994), 153.

³³ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Clarendon Press, 1995), 109.

³⁴ Muhammad Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers* (Westview Press, 1994), 174.

³⁵ Muhammad Hidayatulloh et al., "Transformasi Wacana Pluralisme Dalam Islam Pasca-9/11: Studi Komparatif Antara Islam Barat Dan Islam Nusantara," *Kamali: Jurnal Ilmu Agama* 1, no. 2 (2025): 144–57, <https://doi.org/10.64691/dc2qnt68>.

accordance with the modern principle of accountability which demands public oversight of those in power to prevent abuse of authority and to ensure the orientation of power towards fulfilling citizens' rights.³⁶

The overall principles embodied in the Medina Charter and the Prophet's leadership practices demonstrate substantial alignment with the contemporary human rights framework, without necessarily identifying the two as identical systems. The Charter affirms the protection of religious freedom, security of life and property, equality before the law, protection of minorities, and accountability of rulers as normative elements parallel to the universal notion of human dignity. This relationship demonstrates that human rights values have epistemological roots that are not only born from the modern Western tradition, but also rooted in the ethical-political constructions of classical Islam that place justice, humanity, and recognition of plurality as the primary foundations of legitimate political life.

The Indonesian Political System and the Challenges of Upholding Human Rights

The framework of Indonesia's political system contains an institutional configuration that places the principle of the rule of law as the foundation of the exercise of power, so that every political action and government procedure is subject to the supremacy of the constitution and positive law. The amended 1945 Constitution emphasizes the architecture of the separation and distribution of powers, the mechanism of checks and balances, and the constitutional guarantee of human rights, which is expanded through Chapter XA. According to Jimly Asshiddiqie, this expansion of the constitutional mandate marks a significant transformation that shifts the character of Indonesia's rule of law toward a modern constitutional model that places human rights protection as a parameter of legitimacy of power.³⁷ Indonesia's multilevel political structure should provide the institutional prerequisites for systematic human rights protection. However, Power's findings indicate that political governance still faces distortions due to electoral oligarchy, party fragmentation, and weak accountability of law enforcement agencies, preventing the full effectiveness of this framework.³⁸

The existence of a strong constitutional foundation is reflected in the recognition of civil and political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as the principle of non-discrimination, which is clarified through Articles 28I and 28J of the 1945 Constitution. Derivative regulations such as Law No. 39/1999 concerning Human Rights and Law No. 26/2000

³⁶ Lauren A. McCarthy, "Oversight of the Legal System in an Authoritarian Regime: Police and Court Monitoring in Russia," *Journal of Law and Courts* 13, no. 1 (2025): 195–219, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jlc.2024.27>.

³⁷ Jimly Asshiddiqie, *Konstitusi Dan Konstitusionalisme Indonesia* (Sinar Grafika, 2021), 33.

³⁸ Thomas P. Power, "Jokowi's Authoritarian Turn and Indonesia's Democratic Decline," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 54, no. 3 (2018): 307–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2018.1549918>.

concerning the Human Rights Court complement the constitutional mandate by providing legal instruments that can process serious violations as well as structural violations. According to Todung Mulya Lubis, the consistency of these norms actually reflects the national legal commitment to universal human rights standards.³⁹ However, the reality of implementation shows that there is a gap between norms and practice, which is often triggered by overlapping authority of law enforcement, lack of apparatus capacity, and political resistance to law enforcement targeting powerful political actors. Marzuki and Ali's findings show that legal proceedings in various human rights violation cases remain stalled due to procedural obstacles, weak initial investigations, and competing interests between state institutions, which undermine the integrity of law enforcement.⁴⁰

The phenomena of intolerance and discrimination reflect systemic challenges in upholding constitutional rights, particularly the rights to freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and equality of citizens in public spaces. A 2023 report by the Setara Institute shows a persistent trend of violations of religious freedom for more than a decade, including attacks on houses of worship, restrictions on religious administration, and the permissibility of intolerant groups.⁴¹ According to Herner's research, these problems are often related to the weak commitment of officials to the principle of non-discrimination and the use of regulations that are open to multiple interpretations, such as the Joint Decree of 3 Ministers or exclusive regional regulations that are not in line with the hierarchy of statutory regulations.⁴² Local political structures characterized by negotiations between elites, majority groups, and electoral interests contribute to producing situations that make it difficult to suppress intolerance consistently.⁴³ This condition shows that human rights protection requires not only clear laws but also an egalitarian political culture and electoral incentives that do not provide room for discriminatory practices.

Violations of civil liberties have also emerged through restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right to peaceful assembly. Masduki's findings show an increase in violence against journalists and hacking of media outlets and activists.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Nugroho's findings show an escalation in the criminalization of netizens through the rubber

³⁹ Todung Mulya Lubis, *In Search of Human Rights: Legal–Political Dilemmas of Indonesia's New Order, 1966–1990* (Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2010), 100.

⁴⁰ Suparman Marzuki and Mahrus Ali, "The Settlement of Past Human Rights Violations in Indonesia," *Cogent Social Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2023): 2240643, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2240643>.

⁴¹ Setara Institute, *Kondisi Kebebasan Beragama/Berkeyakinan (KBB) 2022* (2023).

⁴² Robert W. Herner, "Islam and Institutional Religious Freedom in Indonesia," *Religion* 12, no. 6 (2021): 415, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12060415>.

⁴³ David M. Bouchier, "Two Decades of Ideological Contestation in Indonesia: From Democratic Cosmopolitanism to Religious Nationalism," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 49, no. 5 (2019): 713–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2019.1590620>.

⁴⁴ Masduki, "Cyber-Troops, Digital Attacks, and Media Freedom in Indonesia," *Asian Journal of Communication* 32, no. 3 (2022): 218–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2022.2062609>.

articles in the ITE Law.⁴⁵ According to Rahmiwita Nasution, this situation is related to the state's tendency to expand digital surveillance and the disproportionate use of legal instruments to control public opinion. A political ecosystem still rife with vested interests in power causes civil liberties to be treated as a threat, rather than as a democratic mechanism that strengthens accountability.⁴⁶ Mietzner's findings reinforce this view by showing that political actors are more likely to maintain power stability through restricting public space rather than strengthening civil deliberation.⁴⁷ This kind of condition has a direct impact on the quality of democracy and the ability of the public to participate critically in the political process.

The interpretation of human rights challenges within the Indonesian political framework confirms that legal modernity is not enough if This lack of strong political commitment and an institutional culture aligned with democratic principles is unrelated. According to Daniel Lev, the application of law in Indonesia is often overshadowed by power calculations, so that progressive norms in the constitution are not always effectively translated into law enforcement.⁴⁸ The challenges of intolerance, discrimination, restrictions on civil liberties, and violence from the authorities demonstrate that human rights issues are not merely regulatory issues, but rather political constructs that require structural reform and strengthened accountability. All of these dynamics demonstrate that strengthening a democratic rule of law requires consistent policies, professionalism in the legal bureaucracy, and the political courage to ensure constitutional supremacy becomes an operational principle, not merely a normative declaration.

The Relevance of the Medina Political Concept to the Upholding of Human Rights in Indonesia

The relevance of the Medina political concept to strengthening human rights enforcement in Indonesia lies in its normative capacity to build an ethical paradigm that goes beyond mere procedural legalism. The contractual principle embodied in the Medina Charter demonstrates that the legitimacy of power rests on a collective agreement that affirms the rights and obligations of every component of the political community. This framework provides a philosophical foundation for a more participatory model of state-citizen relations while affirming that human rights are not

⁴⁵ Aguk Nugroho, "Implementation of SKB Number 229 of 2021, Number 154 of 2021, Number KB/2/VI/2021 against ITE Delik Article 27 Paragraph (3) of Law Number 11 of 2008," *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Teknologi* 5, no. 3 (2024): 717–35, <https://doi.org/10.59141/jist.v5i3.932>.

⁴⁶ Emmi Rahmiwita Nasution, "Legal Approaches to Combatting Information Warfare in the Age of Social Media and Misinformation in Indonesia," *The Easta Journal Law and Human Rights* 3, no. 3 (2025): 215–22, <https://doi.org/10.58812/eslhr.v3i03.638>.

⁴⁷ Marcus Mietzner, "Authoritarian Innovations in Indonesia: Electoral Narrowing, Identity Politics and Executive Illiberalism," *Democratization* 27, no. 6 (2020): 1021–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1704266>.

⁴⁸ Daniel S. Lev, *Legal Evolution and Political Authority in Indonesia: Selected Essays* (The KLUWER Law International, 2000), 119.

a gift of power, but rather a consequence of human political existence. This synthesis of ideas can enrich the practice of constitutional democracy in Indonesia by strengthening a socio-political culture that places the social contract as the moral basis for policy formulation, so that the orientation of power is not trapped in administrative mechanisms that often obscure the substance of citizen rights protection.

Substantive justice, the primary orientation of Medina's political order, presents the perspective that justice cannot be reduced to formal equality before the law. This approach offers an ethical framework for assessing whether regulations, institutions, and bureaucratic practices truly create conditions that enable the real realization of every individual's rights. Weiss's analysis of human rights enforcement demonstrates the urgent need to correct structural biases that hinder vulnerable groups' access to justice.⁴⁹ The integration of substantive justice values can guide the strengthening of anti-discrimination policies, judicial reform, and increasing the accountability of law enforcement agencies through an orientation that not only focuses on legal certainty, but also ensuring that policy outputs contribute to equitable protection of social rights and opportunities.⁵⁰

The social pluralism articulated within the structure of Medina society offers a model of coexistence that recognizes different identities as legitimate political entities. The emphasis on managing diversity through mechanisms of equal responsibility and respect for group autonomy can inspire strengthening Indonesia's pluralist system, which still faces tensions between the standardization of identity and respect for communal rights. Findings by Garreton, Espinoza, and Cantillan on diversity governance in democratic countries indicate that long-term political stability is more easily achieved when the state recognizes diversity as productive social capital.⁵¹ Adopting the principles of Medina-style social pluralism has the potential to support the development of policy models that balance national cohesion and group rights, particularly through regulations that provide equal participation for religious and ethnic communities in public deliberation processes.

The protection of minorities, a key characteristic of Medina's political order, provides a conceptual lesson regarding the urgency of guaranteeing the rights of non-dominant groups. This value emphasizes that public authorities must actively prevent majority domination, which could

⁴⁹ Benjamin R. Weiss, "Anticipatory Discrimination: How Attorneys' Assumptions about Fact Triers' Biases Sustain Race and Gender Inequality in the Civil Legal System," *Criminology* 63, no. 1 (2025): 239–67, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12399>.

⁵⁰ Marc De Vos, "The European Court of Justice and the March towards Substantive Equality in European Union Anti-Discrimination Law," *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law* 20, no. 1 (2020): 62–87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1358229120927947>.

⁵¹ Matias Garreton et al., "Social Capital in the Urban Context: Diversity and Social Contacts in Chilean Cities," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 45, no. 9 (2023): 1644–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2021.1974302>.

potentially reduce minority access to justice, religious freedom, and political participation.⁵² Kadir et al.'s analysis of minority protection in multicultural democracies emphasizes that the success of human rights enforcement is largely determined by the existence of legal and ethical mechanisms that limit the opportunities for majority decisions to harm small groups.⁵³ Therefore, the value of minority protection can strengthen Indonesia's constitutional principles through the formulation of legal instruments that are more responsive to structural vulnerabilities, for example through strengthening constitutional oversight, policy evaluation based on the impact on vulnerable groups, and increasing minority representation in the legislative process.

The leadership ethics embodied in the Medina political concept present a moral orientation that leaders hold a public mandate that prioritizes integrity, honesty, and a commitment to justice. This perspective has the potential to enrich the discourse on reforming Indonesian political ethics, which is often hampered by a culture of patronage and a short-term focus on power. The findings of Bayram, Keels, and Tokdemir confirm that improving the quality of public leadership significantly influences the effectiveness of human rights enforcement, particularly because leaders determine policy direction, exemplify legal compliance, and regulate the bureaucratic atmosphere.⁵⁴ Integration of ethical leadership values can strengthen the design of public officials' integrity oversight, bureaucratic culture reform, and the formulation of stricter ethical standards for state institutions so that the orientation of public services remains in line with the principles of respecting and protecting human rights.⁵⁵

The conceptual contribution of Medina's political values to strengthening human rights in Indonesia has significant potential because the framework is compatible with the principles of a democratic state based on the rule of law, which affirm popular sovereignty, the rule of law, and respect for human dignity. Contractual values, substantive justice, social pluralism, minority protection, and ethical leadership can enrich the substance of government policies and practices through a moral orientation that emphasizes the integration of legality and ethical legitimacy. However, the limits of its application still need to be considered because a modern constitutional state cannot adopt a historical normative model in its entirety. Medina's political system emerged

⁵² Zulfasari Kusuma et al., "The Intellectual Traces of Women in the Golden Age of Islam: From Science to Cosmopolitan Culture," *Al-Qarawiyyin: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 1, no. 4 (2025): 306–20, <https://doi.org/10.64691/dx657048>.

⁵³ Taquuddin Kadir et al., "The Effectiveness of International Human Rights Law, National Legislation, and Judicial Systems in Protecting Minority Rights," *Global International Journal of Innovative Research* 2, no. 6 (2024): 1374–82, <https://doi.org/10.59613/global.v2i6.202>.

⁵⁴ A. Burcu Bayram et al., "Enforcement of International Human Rights Law: A Comparative Exploration of Alternative Public Opinion Channels," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 27, no. 4 (2024): 1385–407, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481241305975>.

⁵⁵ Aan Warul Ulum, "Reforming Bureaucracy Through Ethics: Strengthening Institutions for Sustainable Development," *Global Review of Tourism and Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2025): 271–82, <https://doi.org/10.53893/grtss.v1i3.414>.

in the context of a small community with a simple social structure, while Indonesia has a complex positive legal framework, a large bureaucracy, and a highly diverse society. Therefore, its application must take the form of inspiring values, not reproducing institutions; adapting ethical principles, not institutional forms; and integrating concepts, not standardizing practices. This approach allows for the harmonization of Islamic ethical values and the modern constitutional system, allowing the strengthening of human rights to proceed through a normative pathway compatible with the principles of democracy, pluralism, and the rule of law.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the political order developed during the Medina period should be understood primarily as an ethical-normative framework rather than as a fixed institutional model to be reproduced in contemporary state systems. Its political foundation was characterized by collective agreement, substantive justice, equality before normative rules, recognition of social plurality, protection of different communities, and leadership conceived as a form of public responsibility. These principles reveal that the Medina political experience integrated moral legitimacy and social responsibility into the exercise of authority, thereby providing a historical framework in which political power was closely connected to the protection of human dignity and the maintenance of an inclusive social order.

The analysis further shows that several principles embedded in the Medina political experience possess substantive compatibility with contemporary human rights values. Religious freedom, protection of life and property, equality, minority protection, participatory deliberation, and accountability of leadership represent points of convergence between the normative legacy of Medina and modern human rights discourse. Such convergence, however, does not imply that the Medina political system and contemporary human rights regimes are historically or institutionally identical. Rather, it indicates that Islamic political heritage contains ethical resources that can enter into constructive dialogue with modern constitutional principles without eliminating the distinctive historical contexts from which each framework emerged.

Within the Indonesian context, the relevance of these principles becomes particularly significant when human rights protection is approached not merely as a question of regulatory completeness, but also as a matter of political ethics, institutional accountability, and substantive access to justice. Indonesia already possesses a constitutional and legal framework for the protection of human rights, yet the literature examined in this study indicates continuing challenges concerning implementation, institutional coordination, protection of vulnerable groups, civil liberties, and consistency in the application of nondiscrimination principles. The Medina framework therefore contributes primarily as an ethical perspective capable of reinforcing the

orientation of public institutions toward justice, public responsibility, social inclusion, and respect for pluralism.

Accordingly, the contribution of Medina political values to the Indonesian political system should take the form of contextual adaptation rather than historical replication. Social contractualism can strengthen the orientation of policymaking toward meaningful citizen participation; substantive justice can provide an ethical basis for evaluating the actual effects of legislation; minority protection can reinforce safeguards against discriminatory governance; and leadership ethics can deepen public accountability in the exercise of political authority. This approach enables Islamic political values to interact constructively with constitutional democracy while maintaining the principles of the rule of law, pluralism, citizenship equality, and universal human dignity.

The findings ultimately confirm that strengthening human rights requires an integration of legal structures, institutional mechanisms, and ethical commitments. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its reliance on textual and literature-based analysis and therefore does not empirically measure how Medina-derived ethical principles are perceived or implemented within contemporary Indonesian political institutions. Future research should incorporate empirical approaches involving policymakers, human rights institutions, religious organizations, and affected communities, as well as comparative analyses across different political traditions. Such developments would enable a more systematic assessment of how historically rooted ethical principles can contribute to the practical strengthening of human rights governance in a modern pluralistic state.

Research Novelty

The novelty of this study lies in its effort to reposition the political experience of Medina from a predominantly historical or constitutional discussion toward an analytical framework for examining contemporary human rights governance. Previous discussions of the Medina Charter have frequently focused on its constitutional characteristics, pluralistic structure, deliberative principles, or historical significance in Islamic political thought. This study extends that discussion by systematically mapping the normative principles of Medina politics, social contractualism, substantive justice, minority protection, social pluralism, participatory responsibility, and leadership ethics. Onto specific challenges associated with human rights protection in a modern constitutional state.

A further contribution lies in the distinction established between normative adaptation and institutional replication. Rather than treating the Medina political structure as a ready-made model of government that should be transferred directly into the Indonesian political system, this study

conceptualizes it as a source of ethical-political principles that require contextual reinterpretation. This distinction allows the historical experience of Medina to remain intellectually relevant without overlooking the substantial differences between seventh-century Arabian society and the institutional complexity of the contemporary Indonesian state. Consequently, the study offers an interpretive framework in which Islamic political heritage can engage modern democracy, constitutionalism, pluralism, and human rights through substantive values rather than formal institutional imitation.

The study also develops an integrative analytical relationship between Islamic political ethics and contemporary human rights governance. Its contribution does not rest on claiming that modern human rights concepts are identical to Medina's political norms, but on identifying areas of normative compatibility that can enrich existing discussions on accountability, nondiscrimination, protection of vulnerable communities, and citizen participation. This approach broadens Islamic political studies by moving the discussion from historical description toward contextual policy relevance while simultaneously providing human rights discourse with a culturally and religiously grounded ethical perspective applicable to Indonesia's pluralistic political environment.

Research Implications

Theoretically, this study implies that the relationship between Islamic political thought and human rights should not be constructed through a binary framework that places religious political heritage and modern human rights norms as inherently incompatible. The findings demonstrate the possibility of an interpretive space in which principles originating from the Medina political experience can be examined in dialogue with constitutionalism and universal human rights. This perspective encourages Islamic political studies to place greater emphasis on substantive values, contextual interpretation, and ethical objectives rather than concentrating exclusively on historical governmental forms. It also provides a conceptual basis for developing further studies on the relationship between Islamic political ethics, democratic citizenship, and rights-based governance.

At the institutional and policy level, the findings imply the importance of strengthening human rights governance through mechanisms that combine legal certainty with substantive justice. The principles identified in the Medina political framework can serve as ethical references for improving accountability mechanisms, evaluating regulations from the perspective of their impact on vulnerable groups, strengthening nondiscrimination in public policy, and expanding meaningful citizen participation in policymaking. Minority protection should therefore be understood not merely as passive tolerance, but as an institutional commitment to ensuring equal

access to rights, political participation, legal protection, and public services regardless of religious, ethnic, or social background.

Practically, the study also highlights the importance of ethical leadership in determining the effectiveness of human rights protection. Institutional reform will have limited effects when public authority is not accompanied by responsibility, transparency, commitment to justice, and openness to public oversight. Accordingly, the values identified in Medina politics may be incorporated into civic education, leadership development, public-service ethics, and policy discourse as moral resources for strengthening a rights-oriented political culture. Their application, however, must remain consistent with Indonesia's constitutional framework and be carried out through contextual interpretation so that religiously grounded ethical values reinforce, rather than replace, democratic institutions, legal equality, pluralism, and the protection of universal human dignity.

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