The Dynamics of the Fatwa on the Prohibition of Interfaith Greetings: Maqasid al-Shariah and its Implications for Multicultural Families In Indonesia

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Abstract: The fatwa issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) on the prohibition of interfaith greetings by Muslims has triggered significant discourse in the context of Indonesia's religiously and culturally plural society. This research aims to analyze the theological basis of the fatwa and its socio-cultural implications, especially in the context of multicultural families, through the magasid syariah approach. Using a qualitative method based on content analysis, this research examines fatwa documents and related literature that discuss Islamic legal theory and interfaith social dynamics. The results show a tension between the principle of hifz al-din (protection of religion) and the goals of adl (justice) and maslahah (public welfare), especially since the implementation of this fatwa has the potential to cause emotional tension, social fragmentation, and decreased cohesion in interfaith families and communities. This study confirms that a normative and rigid theological approach, if it does not consider socio-cultural realities, can hinder efforts to build interfaith harmony. Therefore, a contextual and dialogical approach is needed in the stipulation of fatwas so that they are in line with the lived experience of Muslims in pluralistic societies. These findings provide conceptual and practical contributions to the development of Islamic figh that is more inclusive and adaptive to social diversity in Indonesia.

Keywords: MUI fatwa; *maqasid al-shariah*; multicultural family relations; interreligious harmony.

Abstrak: Fatwa yang dikeluarkan oleh Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) mengenai larangan pengucapan salam lintas agama oleh umat Islam telah memicu diskursus yang signifikan dalam konteks masyarakat Indonesia yang plural secara agama dan budaya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dasar teologis fatwa tersebut serta implikasi sosial-budayanya, khususnya dalam konteks keluarga multikultural,

melalui pendekatan maqasid al-syariah. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis analisis isi, penelitian ini menelaah dokumen fatwa dan literatur terkait yang membahas teori hukum Islam serta dinamika sosial antaragama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya ketegangan antara prinsip hifz al-din (perlindungan agama) dengan tujuan adl (keadilan) dan maslahah (kesejahteraan publik), terutama karena implementasi fatwa ini berpotensi menimbulkan ketegangan emosional, fragmentasi sosial, serta penurunan kohesi dalam keluarga dan komunitas lintas agama. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa pendekatan teologis yang normatif dan rigid, apabila tidak mempertimbangkan realitas sosial-budaya, dapat menghambat upaya membangun kerukunan antarumat beragama. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan pendekatan kontekstual dan dialogis dalam penetapan fatwa agar selaras dengan pengalaman hidup umat Islam di masyarakat majemuk. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi konseptual dan praktis bagi pengembangan fikih Islam yang lebih inklusif dan adaptif terhadap keragaman sosial di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Fatwa MUI; maqasid al-syariah; hubungan keluarga multikultural; keharmonisan antar agama



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Introduction

The fatwa issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia or MUI), which prohibits Muslims from offering interfaith greetings, has sparked considerable public debate in Indonesia's religiously and culturally diverse society. According to the Central Statistics Agency (*Badan Pusat Statistik* or *BPS*), Indonesia is home to over 270 million people, with six officially recognized religions and hundreds of ethnic groups, making interreligious harmony essential for maintaining national unity. In this context, any religious ruling, especially one concerning interfaith interactions, can have profound social implications. While the fatwa intends to preserve Islamic identity and the purity of religious practices, various civil society organizations such as the Wahid Foundation and the Setara Institute have raised concerns that such rulings may reinforce exclusivism and contribute to social fragmentation. Reports of tensions within interfaith communities following public

Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, "Jumlah Penduduk Menurut Agama," Bootstrap Gallery, 2022, https://www.bootstrap.gallery.

Wahid Foundation, "Program - Wahid Foundation Diskusikan Laporan Kemerdekaan Beragama Dan Berkeyakinan Di Indonesia Tahun 2020-2022," 2023, https://wahidfoundation.org/news/detail/Wahid-Foundation-Diskusikan-Laporan-Kemerdekaan-Beragama-dan-Berkeyakinan-di-Indonesia-Tahun-2020-2022; Mohamad Anas et al., "Acceptance of 'the Others' in Religious Tolerance: Policies and Implementation

controversies related to religious greetings further indicate that this issue affects not only personal religious practices but also broader patterns of social interaction.

This study seeks to examine the social implications of the MUI fatwa through the lens of *maqasid al-shariah*, with a particular focus on its impact on family relationships and interreligious dynamics in multicultural contexts. Unlike previous studies that tend to focus predominantly on legal or theological dimensions of fatwas,³ this research aims to bridge Islamic normative analysis with empirical social realities, offering a more holistic understanding of the fatwa's implications in everyday life.

The specific focus on the MUI fatwa is significant due to the council's authoritative status in Indonesia's Islamic landscape. MUI fatwas not only serve as religious guidance for the Muslim community but also often influence public discourse and policy. Unlike fatwas issued by other institutions, whether abroad or from differing sectarian perspectives, the MUI's rulings carry a distinct influence in shaping public norms and Muslim behavior in Indonesia.⁴ Therefore, this study explores how the fatwa functions not only as a theological directive but also as a social instrument that potentially affects national cohesion and interfaith engagement. By examining both its doctrinal basis and its social consequences, the study contributes to broader discourses on religious coexistence, tolerance, and the contextual application of Islamic teachings in pluralistic societies.

A review of existing literature reveals that many previous studies have focused primarily on the legal or theological aspects of the MUI fatwa, often neglecting its social implications. For example, Nasruddin Yusuf and colleagues highlight the necessity of applying maqasid principles within the context of Islamic law in Indonesia, suggesting a framework that prioritizes social welfare and justice. Additionally, Geetha Reddy and Rob M. van Dam discuss the intersections of food, culture, and identity in shaping social interactions within multicultural societies, providing valuable insights into the importance of tolerance in fostering interfaith

Strategies in the Inclusive City of Salatiga Indonesia," *Heliyon* 11, no. 2 (January 30, 2025): e41826, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2025.e41826.

³ Achmad Muhibin Zuhri, Winarto Eka Wahyudi, and Ilham Dwitama Haeba, "Packaging Fatwa in the Post Truth Era: MUI Fatwa Contest Facing New Religious Authority," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama Dan Sosial Budaya* 8, no. 1 (2023): 77–90, https://doi.org/10.15575/jw.v8i1.8776.

⁴ R. Michael Feener, Muslim Legal Thought in Modern Indonesia (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Nasruddin Yusuf et al., "Examining the Basis of Maqashid Syariah in Renewal of Islamic Law in Indonesia," *Petita: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum Dan Syariah* 9, no. 1 (April 1, 2024): 357–75, https://doi.org/10.22373/petita.v9i1.258.

relationships.⁶ Furthermore, Dewa Agung Gede Agung et al. emphasize the role of local wisdom as a model for promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding in Indonesia.⁷ However, despite these contributions, there remains a notable gap in the literature concerning the social impact of the MUI fatwa, particularly regarding its effects on family dynamics and community relations. Maja Wojciechowska and other scholars have explored themes of diversity and inclusion, yet their analyses often fall short of addressing how specific rulings, such as the MUI fatwa, can alter social cohesion.⁸ By identifying these gaps, this research seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the fatwa's broader implications, ultimately advocating for a more integrated approach that considers both theological perspectives and social realities in Indonesia's diverse landscape. Scholars need to explore not only the legal ramifications of religious rulings but also their effects on individual lives and community relationships, as these dimensions are critical for fostering social harmony in a multicultural society.

The unique contribution of this research lies in its focused examination of how the MUI fatwa significantly influenced interactions within multicultural families. While previous studies had explored the fatwa's legal and theological dimensions, few had critically assessed its social ramifications, particularly regarding family dynamics among individuals from different religious backgrounds. This study illuminated aspects of the fatwa that may contradict principles of interfaith dialogue and coexistence, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by multicultural families. In doing so, it positioned itself as a vital piece of scholarship that highlighted the intersections between religious rulings and everyday social practices. The research also addressed the tensions that arose within families due to differing interpretations of the fatwa, which often led to misunderstandings and conflicts. Moreover, it evaluated the fatwa's implications for fostering or hindering social harmony within diverse communities. By bringing these issues to light, the research not only filled a critical gap in the existing literature but also provided practical recommendations for promoting a more inclusive and

Geetha Reddy and Rob M. van Dam, "Food, Culture, and Identity in Multicultural Societies: Insights from Singapore," *Appetite* 149 (June 1, 2020): 104633, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2020.104633.

⁷ Dewa Agung Gede Agung et al., "Local Wisdom as a Model of Interfaith Communication in Creating Religious Harmony in Indonesia," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 9 (January 1, 2024): 100827, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100827.

Maja Wojciechowska, "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice as a Guiding Principle of LIS Professions: Research Trends and Issues," in *Reference Module in Social Sciences* (Elsevier, 2024), https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-323-95689-5.00141-3.

harmonious society. The insights gained proved invaluable for scholars, policymakers, and community leaders navigating the complexities of interfaith relations in contemporary Indonesia. Ultimately, the study offered recommendations to facilitate constructive dialogue and foster mutual understanding among diverse religious communities, contributing to the enhancement of social cohesion.

This research employed a qualitative methodology with a focus on content analysis, specifically examining the fatwa issued by the MUI and related literature. Data were collected through document studies, including an analysis of fatwa documents and relevant academic publications discussing interfaith relations. ⁹ This approach proved particularly effective in understanding the complex interactions between religious rulings and their social implications, allowing for a nuanced exploration of the language, themes, and arguments present in the fatwa. 10 The analysis utilized the magashid al-shariah theory proposed by Yusuf Al-Qaradawi as the analytical lens. 11 This theory was chosen for its clear framework in assessing the impact of fatwas on fundamental objectives within Islamic law, such as justice (adl), public welfare (maslahah), and the protection of religion (hifz al-din). Key concepts, including the protection of life (hifz al-nafs), intellect (hifz al-aql), lineage (hifz al-nasl), and property (hifz al-mal), were examined to evaluate the fatwa's impact on family relations and broader societal interactions. 12 To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, data triangulation was employed by comparing results from various sources. Ultimately, this research provided actionable recommendations to promote

Nurul Ahsin, Titis Thoriquttyas, and Wildan Nasrulloh, "Interfaith Social Relations Among Muslim-Non-Muslim Students: Portraying Religious Harmony in the School," Edukasia: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam 17, no. 1 (July 2, 2022): 139–56, https://doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v17i1.14022; Zulkarnaini Zulkarnaini, Muhammad Ansor, and Laila Sari Masyhur, "Sharia in Power: Non-Muslims and the Performance of Islamic Politics in Aceh Public Sphere, Indonesia," Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies 12, no. 2 (December 17, 2022): 257–83, https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v12i2.257-283; Bani Syarif Maula and Ilyya Muhsin, "Interfaith Marriage and the Religion-State Relationship: Debates between Human Rights Basis and Religious Precepts," Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam 8, no. 2 (May 11, 2024): 791–820, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i2.19479; Muhammad Ansor, "Moving out of Islam on YouTube: Acehnese Christian Narratives, the Public Sphere, and Counterpublics in Indonesia," Studia Islamika 31, no. 3 (December 30, 2024): 543–74, https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v31i3.39771.

Kazuaki Takemura, "Squandering Marital Movables: On Family and Criminal Law in Egypt," Islamic Law and Society 31, no. 4 (May 2, 2024): 431–63, https://doi.org/10.1163/15685195-bja10055; Prashant Iyengar, "Modernization and Legal Reform: Muslim Minors and Freedom of Marriage in India," Islamic Law and Society 31, no. 4 (May 2, 2024): 357–402, https://doi.org/10.1163/15685195-bja10058.

¹¹ Ghada Abdul Salam Ghazal and Kate Kelly Middleton, "Comparative Scriptural Reading of Muslim-Christian Marian Texts: How God Reveals through the Embodied Experience of Pregnancy," *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 34, no. 2 (2024): 211–36, https://doi.org/10.2143/SID.34.2.3293937.

¹² Zahra Mohagheghian, "Mariolatry in the Qur'an: A Critical Review of the Book *Mary in the Qur'an*," *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 34, no. 2 (2024): 257–77, https://doi.org/10.2143/SID.34.2.3293939.

inclusive dialogue and foster social harmony in Indonesia. The findings offered both theoretical insights and practical strategies for community leaders and policymakers navigating the complexities of religious diversity in contemporary society.

Theology vs. Social interpretation of the MUI Fatwa

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) fatwa prohibiting interfaith greetings is deeply rooted in concerns over the potential for syncretism and external influences that could affect the purity of Islamic beliefs. From a theological perspective, the MUI views interfaith greetings, such as "Merry Christmas" or "Shalom," as acts of prayer or supplication that cannot be separated from the religious practices of other faiths. As such, these greetings are perceived as aligning with the theological and doctrinal expressions of the respective religions, which Muslims are discouraged from participating in. This stance is built upon the principle of *hifz al-din* (protection of religion), one of the primary objectives in *maqasid al-shariah*. The MUI's fatwa seeks to maintain the sanctity of Islamic beliefs and to safeguard Muslims from potentially compromising their faith by engaging in acts that may be interpreted as supporting or affirming other religions.

While the theological rationale behind this fatwa is significant, it becomes increasingly contentious when examined in the context of Indonesia's pluralistic society. Indonesia is home to a myriad of religious communities, each contributing to a rich cultural fabric. In such a society, interfaith greetings are often not viewed as acts of religious worship but rather as social expressions of respect and solidarity. These greetings are part of everyday social interactions aimed at fostering goodwill and mutual understanding among individuals of different faiths. The use of greetings like "Merry Christmas" or "Happy Easter" by Muslims is often seen not as participation in another religion's practices but as an acknowledgment of a shared human experience and a gesture of kindness and respect. Therefore, the MUI's strict interpretation of these greetings as religious acts may miss the broader sociocultural context in which these expressions occur.¹³

Mohammad Syifa Amin Widigdo and Homaidi Hamid, "The Power of Fatwā in Indonesia: An Analysis of MUI's Controversial Fatwās," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 2 (December 25, 2018): 146–65, https://doi.org/10.18196/AIIJIS.2018.0085.146-165; Syafiq Hasyim, "Religious Pluralism Revisited: Discursive Patterns of the Ulama Fatwa in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Studia Islamika* 26, no. 3 (December 12, 2019): 475–509, https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v26i3.10623; Alfitri, "Bureaucratizing Fatwā in Indonesia: The Council of Indonesian Ulama and Its Quasi-Legislative Power," *Ulumuna* 24, no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 367–97, https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v24i2.412; Alimin et al., "Gurutta Junaid Sulaeman's Political Hijrah: From Fundamental to Moderate Islam," *Buletin Al-Turas* 27, no. 2 (July 31, 2021): 229–48; Fariz Alnizar, "The Language of Exclusion: Ideology and Power in the Fatwa of the Majelis Ulama

One of the key issues with the MUI fatwa is that it frames interfaith greetings purely within a theological framework, disregarding the social and cultural significance they hold in a multicultural society. In Indonesia, where religious diversity is a defining characteristic of the nation, such greetings are often seen as a means of bridging gaps between communities, fostering a sense of togetherness, and promoting harmony. By limiting the understanding of greetings to their theological implications, the MUI fatwa overlooks the essential role that social diplomacy plays in maintaining intergroup harmony in a multireligious society. The greeting, in this case, functions not as a religious act but as a social practice that promotes understanding, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence.

Scholars have pointed out that while fatwas like this are intended to protect the purity of Islamic beliefs, they can inadvertently create exclusivity and division within society. When interfaith greetings are categorized as a violation of Islamic principles, Muslims in multireligious environments—particularly those in mixed-faith families or diverse communities—face a dilemma between adhering to religious orthodoxy and maintaining positive social relations. This presents a tension between religious loyalty and the need to live harmoniously in a society marked by pluralism. The imposition of such restrictions may isolate Muslims from their neighbors of different faiths, leading to social fragmentation and misunderstanding between religious groups, further exacerbating divisions in an already multicultural society.¹⁴

Moreover, the principle of *hifz al-din*, which the MUI uses to justify the fatwa, needs to be considered in conjunction with other key principles of *maqasid al-shariah*, namely *adl* (justice) and *maslahah* (public benefit). Justice requires that no one, particularly minority religious groups, be unfairly disadvantaged by religious interpretations that do not account for the lived realities of pluralism. ¹⁵ The prohibition of interfaith greetings without providing room for contextual

Indonesia on Ahmadiyah," *Journal of Islamic Law* 6, no. 1 (February 20, 2025): 67–88, https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v6i1.3338.

Jaakko Husa, "Comparative Law's Pyrrhic Victory?," Maastricht Journal of European and Comparative Law 30, no. 6 (December 1, 2023): 680-88, https://doi.org/10.1177/1023263X241252517; Hardivizon Hardivizon, Nurus Shalihin, and Novizal Wendry, "Unveiling Prophetic Maqashid in Hadiths about Rahn," AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis 8, no. 1 (January 11, 2024): 37-54, https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v8i1.8835; Muharir, Irfan Kuncoro, and Agus Yosep Abduloh, "Islamic Legal Hermeneutics on Riba in Digital Banking: A Contextual Reading of Imam Al-Qurthubi's Tafsir on Surah Al-Baqarah 275," Jurnal Ilmiah Mizani: Wacana Hukum, Ekonomi Dan Keagamaan 12, no. 1 (2025): 128-49.

¹⁵ Ingrid Landau et al., "Regulatory Pluralism and the Resolution of Collective Labour Disputes in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Industrial Relations* 65, no. 4 (September 1, 2023): 472–96, https://doi.org/10.1177/00221856231185866.

interpretation can foster feelings of injustice among those who seek to engage in friendly, respectful interactions with people of different faiths. ¹⁶ Furthermore, Maslahah, which emphasizes public welfare, demands that religious policies be in line with promoting collective well-being. If the fatwa leads to social division or polarization, it contradicts the very objective of promoting a healthy, unified society. ¹⁷

In practice, interfaith greetings are not necessarily doctrinal; rather, they serve as symbols of goodwill and mutual acknowledgment. Research on religious pluralism in Indonesia supports the idea that such greetings contribute positively to family and societal harmony. In multicultural communities, where people of different religious backgrounds live side by side, interfaith greetings are not about endorsing other religions but about fostering respect and inclusivity. These greetings create spaces where people of varying beliefs can engage with each other, deepen mutual understanding, and create stronger social bonds. Therefore, in a country as diverse as Indonesia, a more dialogical and contextual approach to religious practice is necessary—one that accommodates the reality of religious pluralism and social diversity.

The gap between a theological, norm-based interpretation of religious practices and the social realities of a pluralistic society is wide. To bridge this divide, it is essential to adopt a more nuanced reading of *maqasid al-shariah* that goes beyond protecting religious purity and encompasses broader social objectives such as justice, peace, and social cohesion.²⁰ *Maqasid al-shariah* is not only about safeguarding religious beliefs but also about ensuring the well-being of society as a whole. By taking into account both the protection of religious identity and the promotion of

Bin Yin and Cheng-Yang Fei, "The Effects of Self-Other Overlap and Group Efficacy on Group-Based Anger and Collective Action Tendency: An Online Experimental Study," Heliyon 10, no. 6 (March 30, 2024), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e28346.

¹⁷ Jasser Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), 2008).

Afthon Yazid et al., "The Role of Bales Nae Tradition in Strengthening Family Harmony and Social Cohesion in the Sasak Community of Lombok, Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Syir'ah* 22, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 79–94, https://doi.org/10.30984/jis.v22i1.2876.

Syariful Alam, Sholahuddin Al-Fatih, and Merve Ozkan Borsa, "Islamism and The Challenge of Democratization in Indonesia," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 15, no. 2 (December 29, 2023): 198–213, https://doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v15i2.23398; Walaa Elsayed, "Building a Better Society: The Vital Role of Family's Social Values in Creating a Culture of Giving in Young Children's Minds," *Heliyon* 10, no. 7 (April 15, 2024): e29208, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e29208.

Moh Dahlan et al., "The Islamic Principle of Ḥifz Al-Nafs (Protection of Life) and COVID-19 in Indonesia: A Case Study of Nurul Iman Mosque of Bengkulu City," Heliyon 7, no. 7 (July 1, 2021): e07541, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e07541.

social harmony, a reinterpretation of the fatwa could allow for a better balance between religious loyalty and social responsibility.

Table 1. Theological vs. Social Interpretation of Interfaith Greetings

Aspect	Theological Interpretation	Social Interpretation
Nature of	Acts of religious worship and	Social expressions of goodwill and
Greetings	supplication	respect
Objective	Protects the purity of Islamic beliefs	Promotes mutual understanding,
		peace, and social cohesion
Cultural	Isolated from the pluralistic reality of	Recognizes the pluralistic society
Context	society	and values inclusivity
Impact on	May create divisions and exclusivity	Enhances social bonds, bridging
Society	within religious communities	gaps between different faiths
Role in maqasid	Focuses on <i>hifz al-din</i> (protection of	Focuses on adl (justice) and maslahah
shariah	religion)	(public welfare)

Source: formulated by the authors, 2025

The table above illustrates the fundamental differences between theological and social interpretations of interfaith greetings, which are the subject of discussion in the MUI fatwa. From a theological perspective, interfaith greetings are seen as acts of worship that should be avoided because they can damage the purity of Islamic beliefs. In contrast, in the social interpretation, this greeting is seen as an expression of respect and kindness between individuals of different beliefs, to strengthen social relations and increase understanding between adherents of different religions.

This difference shows the tension between maintaining the purity of religious teachings and facing the social reality in a highly pluralistic Indonesia. While this fatwa aims to protect Islamic religious beliefs, the social impact of its implementation can create divisions in a multicultural society, especially between Muslims and other religious communities. Therefore, a more contextual and inclusive understanding of religious values is needed to support better social harmony.

A comprehensive understanding of the fatwa should include the application of interdisciplinary perspectives that take into account not just theological principles but also sociological and cultural factors.²¹ By involving scholars from fields such as sociology, anthropology, and social ethics, a broader understanding of the implications of such fatwas can be developed. This approach will help to ensure that Islamic teachings remain relevant to contemporary issues while also maintaining the

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²¹ Yogesh K. Dwivedi et al., "Artificial Intelligence (AI): Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Emerging Challenges, Opportunities, and Agenda for Research, Practice and Policy," *International Journal of Information Management* 57 (April 1, 2021): 101994, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2019.08.002.

integrity of the faith. The goal should be to foster an Islam that is both a guardian of religious purity and a force for inclusivity, dialogue, and peace.²²

The reinterpretation of the MUI fatwa must also involve interfaith dialogue. By engaging with leaders and scholars from other faith traditions, Muslim scholars can gain deeper insights into the role of interfaith greetings in promoting social cohesion. This dialogue would help Muslims understand the importance of gestures of goodwill in fostering positive relations with people of other faiths and how these actions can complement rather than undermine religious beliefs. In doing so, Islamic jurisprudence can evolve to reflect the needs of contemporary society, ensuring that Islam remains a force for good in a diverse and multicultural world.

In conclusion, while the MUI fatwa is grounded in a legitimate concern for the protection of Islamic identity, its social consequences demand a reevaluation of its application in a multicultural society. The fatwa, while aiming to preserve religious purity, risks alienating individuals and communities who are striving for harmonious relationships across religious lines. By integrating *maqasid al-shariah* into a more contextual and inclusive interpretation, Islam can be seen as both a protector of religious values and a promoter of social welfare. Ultimately, the goal should be to foster an Islam that encourages dialogue, respect, and peaceful coexistence, ensuring that Islamic teachings contribute to the greater good of society.

Evaluation Based on Magasid al-Shariah: Adl, Maslahah, Hifz al-Din

The *Maqasid al-shariah* approach provides a holistic framework for evaluating religious policies, including the MUI fatwa that prohibits Muslims from wishing non-Muslims happy holidays. Key principles such as *adl* (justice), *maslahah* (benefit), and *hifz al-din* (protection of religion) provide an important basis for assessing the extent to which the fatwa is aligned with core Islamic values. These three principles enable an analysis that not only focuses on normative aspects but also takes into account the social, humanitarian, and diverse context of Indonesian society. The following table presents a *maqasid al-shariah* -based evaluation of the fatwa.

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²² Fadhli Wiryanto, "The Urgency and Strategic Role of Maqasid Shari'ah and Maslahah in Responding to The Legal and Economic Challenges of Muslim Business," *Journal Of Middle East and Islamic Studies* 10, no. 1 (June 1, 2023), https://doi.org/10.7454/meis.v10i1.158.

Table 2. Evaluation Based on Magasid al-Shariah: Adl, Maslahah, Hifz al-Din

Aspect	Justice (Adl)	Public Benefit (Maslahah)	Protection of Religion (Hifz al-Din)
Definition	Fair and equal treatment for all individuals, regardless of background	Promotes the common good and welfare of society	Safeguarding religious purity from external influences
Principle in Fatwa	A fatwa restricts greetings, creating tension between religious duty and social harmony.	A fatwa undermines social cohesion by prohibiting goodwill gestures	A fatwa aims to protect Islamic purity by avoiding syncretism
Social Impact	Creates division and moral dilemma in multi-religious settings	Can increase polarization and distrust between communities	Risk of isolation and division, hindering interfaith relationships
Goal in Maqasid Shariah	Justice calls for inclusivity and respect for diverse social bonds	Maslahah demands policies that foster harmony and collaboration	Hifz al-din emphasizes protecting Islam's integrity while maintaining peace
Consequence	Unjust restriction of social interactions in diverse societies	Can erode social fabric, reduce trust, and limit cooperation	Risks of misunderstanding, potentially fostering intolerance or division
Recommendati on	Rethink the interpretation to promote social harmony while preserving religious identity.	Reevaluate to foster interfaith understanding and unity	Adjust the approach to allow engagement while preserving Islamic values

Source: formulated by atuthors, 2025

Based on the table above, there are three evaluations based on *maqasid al-shariah*. *First*, the principle of *adl* (justice) in *maqasid al-shariah* emphasizes the importance of fair and equal treatment for all people, regardless of religious, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds.²³ In the context of MUI's fatwa prohibiting Muslims from wishing non-Muslims happy holidays, this principle faces a major challenge. The ban creates a moral dilemma for Muslims who coexist peacefully with communities of different faiths, especially in family, work, and pluralistic societies like Indonesia. In everyday life, especially in families or communities with interfaith members, holiday greetings are not interpreted as a form of theological recognition but rather as an expression of affection, respect, and social solidarity. When Muslims are prohibited from saying these greetings, they are faced with a tension between their

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N. Solikin and M. Wasik, "The Construction of Family Law in The Compilation of Islamic Law In Indonesia: A Review of John Rawls's Concept of Justice and Jasser Auda's Maqashid al-Shari'a," *Ulumuna* 27, no. 1 (2023): 315–40, https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v27i1.708.

religious obligations and the need to maintain social harmony. This can damage the fabric of the family and create a sense of alienation in social life.²⁴

Justice, according to *maqasid al-shariah*, is not only legal-formal justice, but also social and ethical justice. A fatwa that restricts interfaith social interaction can be seen as restricting the right of individual Muslims to participate fully in an inclusive social life. This prohibition has the potential to create injustice because it limits the space for expressions of love and respect for fellow human beings in the diversity that has characterized the Indonesian nation.²⁵ Therefore, the principle of Adl encourages legal interpretations that consider the reality of social plurality. Justice in Islam should not separate people from their environment, but rather encourage respect for differences and strengthen the values of harmony. The fatwa should ideally be reviewed to be more in line with the spirit of social justice that respects the rights and relational needs of Muslims in a pluralistic society.

Second, the principle of maslahah (public good) in maqasid al-shariah requires policies and actions that bring great benefits to the wider community. In this case, the prohibition of interfaith greetings could hurt efforts to build social cohesion.²⁶ Interfaith greetings, such as "Merry Christmas" or "Happy Hari Raya," are simple but important means of creating mutual trust, tolerance, and solidarity. Banning them can lead to segregation and increased suspicion between religious groups, hindering the interfaith cooperation that is needed to face common challenges such as natural disasters, social conflicts, or economic inequality. In a plural society like Indonesia, maintaining social harmony is an important part of the public good. Therefore, a fatwa that cuts off interfaith communication, even if it is intended to protect the aqidah, can hinder the achievement of the common good.²⁷

Muhammad Sholihin, "Fatwa antara Makharij Fiqhiyah dan Market Needs: Eklektisisme Pragmatis di balik Fatwa DSN MUI di Indonesia," Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam 5, no. 1 May (May 9, 2020): 71–88, https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v5i1.1412; Mashuri Mashuri, Iffatin Nur, and Muhammad Ngizzul Muttaqin, "Maqāṣid Sharī'ah Flexibility to Overcome COVID-19 in Indonesia: From Government Policies to Fatwā of Council of Indonesian Ulema (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah," De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah 13, no. 2 (December 31, 2021): 240–63, https://doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v13i2.13280; Rosdalina Bukido and A. Zainal Azhar Ishak, "Exploring the Verdict of Interfaith Marriage under Maqāṣid Sharīa Insights," Mazahibuna: Jurnal Perbandingan Mazhab, June 30, 2024, 65–79, https://doi.org/10.24252/mazahibuna.vi.43025.

Kamaruddin Amin, "MUI Issues Fatwa, Ministry Of Religion Affirms Cross-Religious Greetings To Be Good Practices To Maintain Community Harmony," VOI - Waktunya Merevolusi Pemberitaan, 2024, https://voi.id/en/news/386009.

²⁶ E. Yusdiansyah, "The State Administrative Decision-Making in the Adoption of Maslahah Mursallah Principle in Indonesia," *Sriwijaya Law Review* 7, no. 2 (2023): 287–99, https://doi.org/10.28946/slrev.Vol7.Iss2.2557.pp287-299.

Shofiyullah Muzammil, "The Baha'i Religion: Maqasid Syariah of Social Religious Frictions in Indonesia," Fikrah 11, no. 2 (December 22, 2023): 337–50, https://doi.org/10.21043/fikrah.v11i2.20317; Rahmat Hidayat, "Promoting Social Welfare: Maqasid Sharia Compliance of Indonesian Hajj Financial Manegement Agency's Maslahat Program," Al-Iqtishad: Jurnal Ilmu Ekonomi Syariah 16, no. 2 (December 31, 2024), https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/iqtishad/article/view/43897.

The principle of *maslahah* demands that social benefits and harmony should take precedence over adherence to rigid legal interpretations. Taking into account its far-reaching impact, religious policies such as this fatwa must be formed wisely and contextually. In the spirit of *maslahah*, fatwa drafting should consider social diversity and the importance of maintaining humanitarian bridges between groups.²⁸

Third, the principle of hifz al-din (protection of religion) is indeed the main objective of sharia, which is to maintain the purity of the aqidah of Muslims. However, the understanding of this principle needs to be done contextually and proportionally. The prohibition against wishing non-Muslims a happy holiday is based on the fear of syncretism. However, such greetings in a social context are not a form of theological justification, but rather an expression of courtesy and respect. Islam itself does not reject interfaith interactions based on peace and mutual respect. The strength of aqidah can be proven through openness and tolerance in relationships, not through social isolation.²⁹

Thus, *hifz al-din* can be achieved without having to cut off communication with followers of other religions. Healthy dialogue and interaction strengthen the identity of Islam as a religion that brings mercy to all of nature. Thus, religious protection should not be interpreted as isolation, but as preserving identity while still interacting peacefully with other parties. MUI's fatwa should be reviewed to maintain the principle of *hifz al-din* without sacrificing the principles of Adl and Maslahah. In a multicultural society, protecting Islam must be done in a way that does not create walls of separation, but rather builds bridges of peace between religious communities.³⁰

Based on the evaluation of *maqasid al-shariah* described above, MUI's fatwa prohibiting holiday greetings to non-Muslims raises serious issues in terms of justice (adl), public benefit (maslahah), and religious protection (hifz al-din). The principle of adl demands fair and inclusive treatment in a pluralistic society, while maslahah emphasizes the importance of maintaining social harmony, which is threatened by the ban. Although hifz al-din aims to maintain the purity of the faith, its interpretation should not lead to social exclusion that is contrary to the spirit of Islam as a mercy for the universe. Therefore, this fatwa should be reviewed so that it does

²⁹ Muhammad Chairul Huda and Ilyya Muhsin, "Liminality Rituals of Interfaith Families: Symbolic Interactionism and Maqashid Sharia Perspectives," *Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi Dan Penelitian Hukum Islam 5*, no. 2 (May 15, 2022): 1–20, https://doi.org/10.30659/jua.v5i2.20488.

Nurus Shalihin et al., "Ramadan and Strengthening of the Social Capital of Indonesian Muslim Communities," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 76, no. 3 (December 21, 2020): 9, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i3.6241.

F. Alnizar, F.M. Manshur, and A. Ma'ruf, "Following the Global Rejection: The Motives of Majelis Ulama Indonesia's Fatwas on Ahmadiyah," *Studia Islamika* 29, no. 3 (2023): 519–46, https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v29i3.15349.

not lead to social inequality, but rather becomes a means of building humanitarian bridges that are in line with the main values of *maqasid al-shariah*.

The Impact on Multicultural Family Relationships In Indonesia

Multireligious families in Indonesia, such as those between Muslim and non-Muslim couples, often face emotional challenges due to the MUI's ban on interfaith greetings. Greetings during holidays or important moments symbolize affection and respect, and their absence can create emotional distance and conflict within the family.³¹ The ban can trigger confusion and frustration as non-Muslim family members may not understand the theological reasoning behind it, while Muslim members feel torn between maintaining religious teachings and maintaining family harmony. Religious occasions that are usually occasions of solidarity become sources of alienation.

The principle of *hifz al-din* (preserving religion) is important, but in the context of multireligious families, its application needs to consider social realities. Interfaith greetings are not always theological, but rather a social expression of love. Families that are willing to interpret religious teachings contextually tend to be more harmonious. For example, greetings such as "Happy Holidays" can be a middle ground that preserves faith while honoring non-Muslim relatives. By emphasizing goodwill and Islamic social values, Muslims can maintain religious principles without harming family relationships.

MUI's fatwa may strengthen internal Muslim identity, but in multireligious families, it risks undermining solidarity. Simple gestures such as giving greetings during holidays can strengthen family relationships, while prohibitions can create a sense of alienation. However, some families choose to dialogue and understand differences, even creating new traditions that are inclusive. An open and respectful attitude can bridge differences in beliefs, maintain togetherness, and make differences a strength.³²

The dynamics of multireligious families reflect great potential for building social cohesion amid Indonesian pluralism. MUI's fatwa, if rigidly applied, could limit the contribution of such families as models of interfaith harmony.³³ When

N. Abbas et al., "Theological Impact of Marriage for Religious Minority Families in Bali and Makassar," *Samarah* 9, no. 1 (2025): 130–47, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v9i1.21130.

³² Sehat Ihsan Shadiqin and Siti Ikramatoun, "Mawlid Celebration in Aceh: Culture, Religious Expression, and Political Medium," *Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 46, no. 1 (July 1, 2022): 122–38, https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v46i1.919.

Sutomo et al., "Religious-Sociocultural Networks and Social Capital Enhancement in Pesantren," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (June 18, 2024): 137–48, https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v10i1.19997.

greetings and participation in religious celebrations are restricted, opportunities to strengthen mutual trust and social empathy are eroded. In fact, in dealing with common social problems such as poverty or education, interfaith cooperation is very important.³⁴

Table 3. Religious Rationale, Social Impact, and Adaptive Responses to the MUI Fatwa on Interfaith Greetings

Theme	Religious Basis (Fatwa Rationale)	Observed Impact in Families/Society	Suggested Response
Emotional Tension in Families	Preservation of aqidah (faith purity)	Misunderstandings, feelings of rejection, and emotional distance within the family	Promote empathy and contextual religious understanding.
Psychological Strain	Fear of violating Islamic principles	Anxiety, guilt, and emotional conflict	Educate on fiqh nuances and emphasize intention (niyyah)
Family Cohesion Challenges	Restriction to prevent syncretism or religious confusion	Reduced intimacy and disrupted holiday interactions	Encourage respectful expressions like "Happy Holidays."
Social Polarization	Boundary maintenance between Islam and other religions	Reduced interfaith interaction, potential community fragmentation	Encourage interfaith communication and cultural diplomacy
Loss of Role Models for Harmony	Misinterpretation of religious boundaries	Fewer positive examples of peaceful religious coexistence in public discourse	Highlight inclusive family stories in religious forums.
Barriers to Social Cooperation	Excessively literal application of religious texts in pluralistic settings	Difficulty in building coalitions across faiths for public welfare	Emphasize <i>maslahah</i> (public good) and <i>adl</i> (justice) in interfaith collaboration

Source: formulated by authors, 2025

Based on the table above, reducing the negative impact of the fatwa requires open communication within the family and a shared understanding of the principles of each religion. Tolerance education and strengthening the value of diversity should be a priority, especially in pluralistic family environments. Muslims are invited to understand that interfaith greetings are not a threat to faith, but a form of

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³⁴ Ikhwanuddin Harahap and Adelina Nasution, "Constitutionalization of Religion in Review of Maqâshid Sharî'ah: Statutory Study of Shariaism in the City of Langsa, Aceh," Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman 47, no. 1 (June 26, 2023): 67–85, https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v47i1.982.

maslahah (public good) and adl (justice). Dialogue that emphasizes goodwill and human values can make greetings a bridge, not a barrier between family members.³⁵

Overall, the impact of the fatwa on the prohibition of interfaith greetings in the context of multireligious families poses a dilemma between maintaining the purity of religious teachings and maintaining social harmony. If not applied wisely, it has the potential to create emotional distance, reduce family solidarity, and weaken social cohesion. Therefore, an adaptive, contextual, and humanistic religious approach is needed so that Islamic values remain relevant in a pluralistic reality, without sacrificing peaceful and respectful family relationships.

Social Response and Future Directions for Interfaith Harmony

MUI's fatwa banning interfaith greetings has drawn mixed responses from Indonesians. Conservative groups support this fatwa as a form of protection for the purity of Islamic teachings and concerns over religious syncretism. In contrast, moderate and progressive groups consider that interfaith greetings are a form of respect and a tool to maintain harmony in a multicultural society.³⁶ The fatwa led to social tensions in various spaces of interaction, such as the family and the workplace, reflecting the tug-of-war between religious authority and the need for coexistence in a pluralistic society.³⁷

Table 4. Social Responses and Strategic Directions Regarding the MUI Fatwa on Interfaith Greetings

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Aspect	Conservative View	Moderate/Progressive View	Future Strategic Direction
Religious	Upholding the purity	Interfaith greetings as a	Harmonizing doctrine with
Reasoning	of Islamic doctrine	gesture of respect	inclusive values
Social	Fear of syncretism	Emphasizing social cohesion	Promoting inclusive religious
Interpretation	and religious dilution	and mutual respect	narratives through dialogue
Perceived	Protects religious	Potentially divisive in	Encouraging fatwa revisions
Impact	identity	multicultural contexts	to reflect plural societal needs
Educational	Religious exclusivism	Advocates of interfaith	Integrating pluralism and
Approach	is taught in some	tolerance and civic harmony	justice-based Islamic
	circles	·	principles in schools
Use of Media	Limited, often	Promotes stories of interfaith	Amplifying moderate and
	supports the fatwa	harmony and shared values	inclusive discourse on digital
	narrative	•	platforms

Denny Adri Tarumingi et al., "The Values of Social Education Through Inter-Religious Dialogue in the Javanese Villages of Tomohon and Tumatangtang," *Qalamuna: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, Dan Agama* 16, no. 1 (June 4, 2024): 417–28, https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v16i1.4940.

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Hamdi et al., "Developing Digital-Based Islamic Religious Education Teaching Modules on the Subject Matter of Duha Prayer in Elementary Schools," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 131–46, https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i1.7520.

³⁷ Syamsudin, Opinions of Religious Figures in Langensari District Regarding Waqf, 2024.

Aspect	Conservative View	Moderate/Progressive View	Future Strategic Direction
Recommended	Maintain the current	Revise the fatwa to	Build alliances between MUI,
Action	fatwa without	accommodate plural social	civil society, and educators
	revision	realities	

Source: formulated by authors, 2025

The table above shows that a comparison of conservative and moderate views shows fundamental differences in religious reasoning, social interpretation, and media use. Despite their differences, they can be brought together through future strategies that emphasize the importance of interfaith dialogue, tolerance education, and the dissemination of inclusive narratives through the media.³⁸ This can maintain a balance between adherence to religious teachings and the need to maintain social harmony.³⁹ In the future, inter-religious harmony needs to be built through an inclusive approach and open dialogue between religious leaders, academics, government, and civil society. Fatwas should consider their social impact in the context of a plural society. According to Abduh, maintaining religious identity does not mean avoiding interfaith interactions, but rather adjusting religious practices to support shared social welfare.⁴⁰

Furthermore, tolerance education from an early age is also very important to form a generation that is ready to live in diversity. The education curriculum, both in public schools and madrasahs, must include the values of justice (adl), benefit (maslahah), and protection of religion (hifz al-din).⁴¹ This kind of education will form an understanding that religious differences are not a threat, but rather a social wealth that needs to be celebrated. MUI's fatwa on the prohibition of interfaith greetings should be reviewed to be more in line with Indonesia's pluralistic social reality.⁴² This revision does not mean sacrificing religious principles, but opening up space for Muslims to hold on to their beliefs while establishing healthy social relations with followers of other religions. This inclusive view is believed to

³⁸ Elis Mila Rosa et al., "Kontestasi Keberagamaan Di Media Sosial: Kontra Interpretasi Radikalisme Di Platform Youtube," *Jurnal Penelitian Agama* 23, no. 2 (December 1, 2022): 175–96, https://doi.org/10.24090/jpa.v23i2.2022.pp175-196.

Moh Asror et al., "Yusuf Al-Qaradawi's Perspective on Fiqh Aqalliyat in a Multicultural Society," Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora 21, no. 1 (July 31, 2023): 83–98, https://doi.org/10.18592/khazanah.v21i1.8900.

⁴⁰ Zulfikri Zulkarnaini and Mohammed A. F. Badawi, "The Relevance of Muhammad Abduh's Thought in Indonesian Tafsir: Analysis of Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, December 26, 2021, 113– 48, https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol21.iss1.art5.

⁴¹ Ilyya Muhsin, Achmad Maimun, and Sukron Ma'mun, "Habitus of Interreligious Harmony in a Central Java Village," *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, August 27, 2024, 579–610, https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol23.iss2.art3.

⁴² Hanudin Amin et al., "Waqif Preference of Waqf-Based Qardhul Hassan Financing in Malaysia: An Analytic Hierarchy Process Perspective," *International Journal of Islamic Economics and Finance (IJIEF)* 6, no. 2 (July 31, 2023): 337–60, https://doi.org/10.18196/ijief.v6i2.17701.

strengthen social integration and enrich the Islamic tradition in a complex national context. 43

Then, mass media and digital platforms also have an important role in spreading the values of interfaith harmony. The media can promote positive narratives about tolerance and interfaith dialogue, and counter exclusive discourses that exacerbate differences. Through the presentation of fair and inclusive information, the media can become a bridge of interfaith understanding while supporting the formation of a peaceful and united society in diversity.⁴⁴

Based on the above, MUI's fatwa banning interfaith greetings reflects the tension between conservative religious understanding and the need to live harmoniously in Indonesia's pluralistic society; while conservatives see this fatwa as protecting the purity of Islamic teachings, moderates see it as an obstacle to inclusive social interaction. To maintain the balance between doctrine and social reality, a future approach is needed that emphasizes interfaith dialogue, tolerance education based on the values of justice and benefit, and the active role of the media in spreading narratives of peace and mutual respect. Revising fatwas that take into account the plurality of society not only strengthens social integration but also enriches the Islamic tradition to make it more adaptive in a complex national context.

Conclusion

The MUI fatwa banning interfaith greetings, issued in May 2024, raises significant concerns about its impact on interfaith relations in Indonesia's multicultural society. While intended to protect Islamic identity, the fatwa risks deepening divisions between Muslims and non-Muslims, potentially undermining social cohesion. This study, through the lens of *maqasid al-shariah*, demonstrates that the prohibition on interfaith greetings disrupts family dynamics, especially in multicultural families, and complicates the social fabric by hindering necessary interfaith dialogue. The research highlights the need for a more balanced approach that respects both religious integrity and social harmony. Future studies should explore the long-term effects of such fatwas, employing broader methodologies to gain a deeper understanding of their social consequences and inform more inclusive policies for interfaith cooperation.

⁴³ Muhammad Natsir, Cakra Arbas, and Meta Suriyani, "Law on Khamr Under Qanun Jinayat in Aceh and Brunei Darussalam: A Comparative Study," *Jurnal Media Hukum* 26, no. 1 (June 29, 2019): 71–82, https://doi.org/10.18196/jmh.20190124.

Dwi Wahyuni and Intan Karlina, "Digital Activism for Peace: Exploring Instagram's Role in Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia," *Jurnal Fuaduna: Jurnal Kajian Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 8, no. 2 (December 31, 2024): 110–23, https://doi.org/10.30983/fuaduna.v8i2.8740; Hadiana Trendi Azami, Tsaqifa Auliya Afifah, and Ghina Syaikhah Mumtaz, "Resepsi Dialog Antar Agama di Media Sosial: Studi Kasus Youtube Deddy Corbuzier Dalam Tagar LoginCloseTheDoor," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 22, no. 2 (December 31, 2024): 593–628, https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v22i2.1196.

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