

## Religious Authority in Social Media: The Influence of Ali Jum`ah's Online Fatwa (b. 1953 AD) and Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b. 1926 AD - d. 2022 AD)

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**Abstract** The inevitable rise of modernity means that clerics will lose their role and will no longer be autonomous. Nevertheless, as a new way to maintain their position in society and strengthen their authority, it is not uncommon for them (ulama) to use technological advances to record fatwas and advice delivered to the public. This study examines several fundamental issues concerning how Ali Jum`ah and Yusuf al-Qaradhawi build their religious authority through new media, and to what extent new media plays a role in increasing their religious authority. This research found the way the two figures built their religious authority through new media. Ali Jum`ah built his religious authority through new media when he led Dar al-Ifta. He turned Dar al-Ifta into a modern global institution based on new media. Meanwhile, al-Qaradhawi built his religious authority through new media by cooperating with experts and various professionals in the field of media, one of them being through the Qatar-based al-Jazeera TV channel. The power and role of new media utilized by the two figures were able to mobilize an unprecedented number of people, thus strengthening their authority. This research contributes to producing new knowledge about the emergence of Islamic public space through the presence of new media in the Islamic world as an effort to stimulate and expand the movement of *ijtihad* that is more responsible and more effective in this contemporary era.

**Abstrak** Kebangkitan modernitas yang tak terelakkan menyebabkan ulama kehilangan perannya dan tidak lagi otonom. Meski demikian, sebagai cara baru untuk mempertahankan posisinya di masyarakat dan memperkuat kewibawaannya, tidak jarang para ulama memanfaatkan kemajuan teknologi untuk mencatat fatwa dan nasehat yang disampaikan kepada masyarakat. Kajian ini mengkaji beberapa permasalahan mendasar mengenai bagaimana Ali Jum`ah dan Yusuf al-Qaradhawi membangun otoritas keagamaannya melalui media baru, dan sejauh mana peran media baru dalam meningkatkan otoritas keagamaannya. Penelitian ini menemukan cara kedua tokoh tersebut membangun otoritas keagamaannya melalui media baru. Ali Jum`ah membangun otoritas keagamaannya melalui media baru ketika ia memimpin Dar al-Ifta. Dia mengubah Dar al-Ifta menjadi institusi global modern berdasarkan media baru. Sementara itu, al-Qaradhawi membangun otoritas keagamaannya melalui media baru dengan menggandeng para ahli dan berbagai profesional di bidang media, salah satunya melalui saluran TV al-Jazeera yang berbasis di Qatar. Kekuatan dan peran media baru yang dimanfaatkan kedua tokoh tersebut mampu memobilisasi massa dalam jumlah yang belum pernah terjadi sebelumnya, sehingga memperkuat otoritas mereka. Penelitian ini berkontribusi menghasilkan pengetahuan baru tentang kemunculan ruang publik Islam melalui kehadiran media baru di dunia Islam sebagai



upaya merangsang dan memperluas gerakan ijtihad yang lebih bertanggung jawab dan efektif di era kontemporer ini.

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**Keywords** Religious Authority; New Media; Fatwa; Ali Jum`ah; Yusuf al-Qaradhawi

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## Introduction

Discussions about religious authority (ulama) along with the challenges and developments of the times, continue to experience fragmentation and contestation. As a new method to maintain its position in society and strengthen their authority, it is not uncommon for ulama to use technological advances to codify fatwas and advice delivered to public.<sup>1</sup> In order to be easily accepted and digested by the public, Fatwas are always presented in a modern method<sup>2</sup> and cover all aspects of life. One of the new methods to convey fatwas is by promoting internet usage within the Muslim community (Muslims Online).<sup>3</sup> Through the development of new media, in this case, the internet opens opportunities for professionals, including muftis, to use it as a means of disseminating their fatwa online.

With the explosion of the internet as a fairly recent phenomenon,<sup>4</sup> a mufti needs to produce and publish their content on the World Wide Web (WWW). This site will develop into a center where every Muslim can read content, exchange ideas, and follow ideas and communication without limits. The Internet is expected to be a new media that will help in uniting and strengthening the ummah in widening the channels of communication between Muslim brothers.<sup>5</sup> According to the report results *Arab Social Media Report (ASMR)*,<sup>6</sup> There are around 60 million internet users in Arab countries and this number reached 100 million in 2015. This increase occurred significantly when the Arab Spring began. In the context of the Arab Spring, as stated by Aria Nakissa and Adnan Zulfikar, the Arab Spring events have shows how clerics in the Middle East in 2011 were involved in issuing fatwas in some cases to participate in protests against the ruling regime.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Haula Noor, 'Dinamika Otoritas Keagamaan Di Indonesia', *Indo-Islamika*, Volume 1, Nomor 2, (2012).

<sup>2</sup>The existence of questions and answers on religious issues via websites or social media on the internet (*Facebook, Email, WhatApps, Twitter, etc.*) makes it easier for the public to ask questions to the mufti.

<sup>3</sup>Gary R. Bunt, *Virtually Islamic*, Translated by Suharsono, *Islam Virtual : Menjelajah Islam di Jagad Maya* (Yogyakarta: Suluh Press, 2005), 167.

<sup>4</sup>According to the survey, "internet\_users\_in\_the\_world\_by\_region\_december\_2019", for example, internet usage in Asia is 49.6%, Europe 17.0%, Africa 9.4%, Middle East 3.7%, North America 8.9%, Australia 0.7% of the population base of 3.6 billion internet users in the world. Source [www.internetworldstats.com/](http://www.internetworldstats.com/). Accessed: 2020-07-26 14:52.

<sup>5</sup><http://www.muslimonline.com/>. Accessed: 26-07-2020 14:52.

<sup>6</sup>Arab Social Media Report (2012). Social media in the Arab world: Influencing societal and cultural change? 2 (1), 129. See more at the following link: <https://www.arabsocialmediareport.com/UserManagement/PDF/ASMR%204%20updated%2029%2008%2012.pdf>

<sup>7</sup>Aria Nakissa, 'The Fiqh of Revolution and the Arab Spring: Secondary Segmentation as a Trend in Islamic Legal Doctrine', *The Muslim World* 105:3 (2015): 398–421. See also Adnan Zulfikar, 'Revolutionary Islamic Jurisprudence: A Restatement of the Arab Spring', *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics* 49 (2017) : 443–97.

Research by Turner,<sup>8</sup> Watson,<sup>9</sup> Eickelman, and Anderson<sup>10</sup> examines the existence of fragmentation and contestation of religious authority. They describe how the fragmentation and contestation of religious authority are caused by new media. In their study, they argue that the presence of new media has caused religious authority to experience fragmentation which ultimately gave birth to new religious authorities. Meanwhile, Siti Mariatul Kiptiyah,<sup>11</sup> Sunarwoto, and Najib Kailani<sup>12</sup> illustrate that the emergence of new religious authorities through new media does not immediately shift traditional religious authorities. Traditional religious authorities will adapt to the context of the development of the times, and can even be superior.

This study strengthens the view of religious authority through new media. The construction of religious authority (ulama'), will be stronger (developed) with the support (sustaining) of new media. Although the media is important, not all who use the media succeed in developing authority. The media is not the only support, there is networking, state support, political opportunities, and legitimacy from followers. This study takes the case study of Ali Jum`ah and Yusuf al-Qaradhawi. Both of them are religious authorities who have solid religious knowledge. They represent how religious discourse and public Islamic discourse are contested by both religious authorities. This study will analyze deeper issues related to the online fatwa of Ali Jum`ah and Yusuf al-Qaradawi.

Researcher will see the contestation of religious authority and the use of new media from two sides with clear case studies. Ali Jum`ah as a representative of the ulama and mufti of the country, while Yusuf al-Qaradhawi represents an independent ulama who has great attention and cares about the dynamics of the problems of the people. A researcher wants to see how both of them build authority with new media to become a global mufti. The close relationship between the construction of religious authority and new media indicates success in developing authority. How new media becomes a channel for expressing opinions and building authority.

There are several reasons behind this researcher's examination of both figures. The most basic reason is that Ali Jum`ah and Yusuf al-Qaradhawi are central ulama in the Arab Spring, especially the Egyptian Revolution. Both are ulamas who intensively provide fatwas to the Islamic community and have personal websites and online fatwas. The online fatwa page that Ali Jum`ah refers to is

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<sup>8</sup>Bryan S Turner, 'Religious Authority and the New Media,' *Theory, Culture & Society* 24, no. 2 (2007): 117–34.

<sup>9</sup>CW Watson, 'A Popular Indonesian Preacher: The Significance of AaGymnastiar,' *Journal of Islamic Studies* 11, no. 4 (2005): 177–210.

<sup>10</sup>Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*, Indiana University Press (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1-18.

<sup>11</sup>Siti Mariatul Kiptiyah, 'The Celebrity's Kyai and New Media.' *Journal of Society and Culture* 19 (3) (2017): 339–52. <https://doi.org/10.14203/jmb.v19i3.495>.

<sup>12</sup>Najib Kailani and Sunarwoto, 'Islamic Televangelism in the New Religious Authority Landscape,' in *Ulama and the Nation-State: Reading the Future of Islamic Politics in Indonesia*, ed. Noorhaidi Hasan (Yogyakarta: Center for the Study of Islam, Democracy and Peace, 2019), 182.

*www.draligomaa.com* and *www.dar-alifta.org*. As for online fatwa that becomes Yusuf al-Qaradawi's reference is *www.al-qaradawi.net* and *www.islamonline.net*.

### **Biographical Sketch of Ali Jum`ah and Yusuf al-Qaradhawi**

Ali Jum`ah and Yusuf al-Qaradawi are two world Muslim figures who lived at the end of the nineteenth century AD, there is difference starting appear between modernist and traditionalist Muslim religious understandings.<sup>13</sup> Researcher interested in studying these two figures, considering that both of them have intellectual depth in the field of fatwas and have different social attributes in the political map of the ulama, especially in Egypt. The construction of religious authority built by both also has quite significant and very relevant implications for the development of ulama authority.

Ali Jum`ah and Yusuf al-Qaradawi have the same background. Both were born in Egypt, came from the intellectual climate of al-Azhar and had the capacity as mufti. This is important, because it is the basis for researchers in tracing and studying the figures of both figures from a socio-cultural perspective, intellectual background, and political conditions that underlie the formation of their ideas and thoughts. However, Ali Jum`ah and Yusuf al-Qaradawi have different sides, for example regarding relations with the state, both also have different views in responding to the problem of the Egyptian Revolution.

Socio-political factors can play an important role in changing fatwa law. Yusuf al-Qaradhawi's intellectual attitude and thoughts were greatly influenced by Hasan al-Banna, who was the founder of the transnational Islamic organization and political party in Egypt, namely "Ikhwanul Muslimin". Yusuf al-Qaradhawi had great activity in spreading the da'wah of this organization, both when he was in Egypt and when he was outside Egypt. While Ali Jum'ah had almost every opinion issued from his thoughts, all of them were formed from the customs and nuances in Egypt. Before serving as *Grand Mufti* of the Republic of Egypt, almost all of his life was dedicated to the institution of al-Azhar both at the formal and non-formal education levels.

### **Building Religious Authority**

In the Egyptian context, Ali Jum`ah built his clerical career through affiliation with various state institutions, including al-Azhar. Ali Jum`ah joined the al-Azhar clerical networking. This clerical network became an important component for the government to build its political legitimacy. Ali Jum`ah is a clerical who in Bachar's classification is categorized as an established clerical.<sup>14</sup> According

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<sup>13</sup>Brown, 'Contention in Religion and State in Postrevolutionary Egypt', *Social Research*, Vol 79, No. 2, (2012), 542.

<sup>14</sup>Shmuel Bachar, Rachel Machtiger, and Yair Minzili, 'Ulama Establishment and Radicalism in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan', *Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World*, 1.4 (2006), 2.

to Bachar et al., al-Azhar is involved in providing legitimacy to the government's strategic policies and plays a role in dealing with state opposition.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from being affiliated with al-Azhar, in building his religious authority, Ali Jum`ah held a position in a state institution, one of which was the state fatwa institution. Egypt has a fatwa institution, namely Dar al-Ifta` al-Misriyyah.<sup>16</sup> The fatwas issued by this institution are often used as the main reference for Muslims. The codification of fatwas issued by Dar al-Ifta` al-Misriyyah by the local government is often adopted in many of its policies.<sup>17</sup> Ali Jum`ah served as Egypt's grand mufti from 2003 to 2013. The grand mufti played an important and beneficial role not only for Egyptians but also for Muslim communities around the world.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to Ali Jum`ah, Yusuf al-Qaradawi built his clerical career by establishing cooperation not only with other Islamic scholars and intellectuals, but with experts from various professional fields such as journalists, editors, publishers, television presenters and managers of media institutions. Online al-Qaradawi could more freely spread his religious thoughts after being in Qatar through al-Jazeera TV which network could be received by the Gulf countries. The peak of his golden age was with his weekly agenda, namely the program al-Syari`ah wa al-Hayah.<sup>19</sup> Thanks to the use of new media, al-Qaradawi became increasingly well-known and his clericism was recognized internationally.

In addition, Yusuf al-Qaradawi also played a major role in the establishment of collective fatwa institutions. One of them is the establishment of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR).<sup>20</sup> This institution acts as a fatwa issuer and researcher of Islamic law relating to Muslim minorities in Europe.<sup>21</sup> Al-Qaradawi's involvement in ECFR was aimed at spreading the influence of his religious and political opinions.<sup>22</sup> According to Caeiro, the institution of collective fatwas through ECFR can be said to be one of al-Qaradawi's strategies to expand his religious authority to include non-Muslim

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<sup>15</sup>There are several examples of al-Azhar's legitimacy of Egyptian policies, such as al-Azhar's legitimacy of the 1978 Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel, which was opposed by Islamists at the time, then al-Azhar's legitimacy of Egypt's participation in the 1991 Gulf War, and then al-Azhar's legitimacy of Egypt's intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan after the events of September 11, 2001. See Bachar, et al., 'Establishment of Ulama and Radicalism in Egypt', 4.

<sup>16</sup>*Dar al-Ifta` al-Misriyyah* was established in 1895 based on a decree of the Egyptian Khedive Abbas Hilmi addressed to Nizharah Haqqaniyah No. 10 dated November 21, 1895. The letter was received by Nizharah on 7 Jumadil Akhir 1313 H number 55. Initially, *Dar al-Ifta`* was one of the institutions under the Egyptian Ministry of Justice. The Egyptian fatwa institution plays an important role in providing fatwas to the general public and consulting with judicial institutions in Egypt. See <http://dar-alifta.org/AR/Aboutdar.aspx?sec=.110>.

<sup>17</sup>Dar al-Ifta al-Misriyyah profile, see <http://dar-alifta.org/AR/Aboutdar.aspx?sec=.110>.

<sup>18</sup>Ansori, 'The Position of Fatwa in Several Muslim Countries (Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam and Egypt)', Analysis: Journal of Islamic Studies, 17.1 (2017), 137 <<https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v17i1.1790>>.

<sup>19</sup>Gräf, 'Sheikh Yūsuf Al-Qaradāwī in Cyberspace', Die Welt Des Islams, 47.3 (2007), 417. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006007783237464>

<sup>20</sup>See in [www.e-cfr.org](http://www.e-cfr.org). Accessed February 25, 2022.

<sup>21</sup>Gräf, 'Sheikh Yūsuf Al-Qaradāwī in Cyberspace', 411.

<sup>22</sup>Scott Kugle and Stephen Hunt, 'Masculinity, Homosexuality and the Defense of Islam: A Case Study of Yusuf al-Qaradawi's Media Fatwa', 2.2 (2012), 26.

audiences.<sup>23</sup> Not only that, but also to center himself as a global authority, Yusuf al-Qaradawi together with scholars from various Muslim-majority countries founded an international organization called the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS). IUMS aims to respond to the challenges of the times try to solve various problems faced by the people and spread the understanding of moderate Islam.<sup>24</sup>

### **Becoming A Global Mufti: Delocalization of Authorities and New Audiences (*Mustafti*)**

A global mufti is a mufti whose fatwas has an influence on the global or international world beyond his own country. The existence of a global mufti, in addition to gaining a global audience in terms of geography, will also influence other countries (accepting his fatwas) and also receive reactions (opposing his fatwas). The consequence of a global mufti is the existence of global dimensions or issues that are the focus of his fatwas. Global muftis do not only respond to domestic political issues (Egypt or Qatar in the case of Ali Jum`ah and Yusuf al-Qaradawi) but also participate in responding to political issues abroad, such as the issue of Palestinian independence, Arab Spring, Nation-State, LGBT, Human Rights, Gender, and Climate Change. The existence of a global mufti can also be marked by the presence of *mustaftis* from several other countries that request fatwas specifically to be applied in their home countries. Thus, the existence of a global mufti brings many movements and spreads of Islamic law from one place to another. As an authoritative fatwa giver, the global mufti received so many questions (audience/*mustafti*) from various countries.<sup>25</sup>

To position themselves as global muftis, Ali Jum`ah and Yusuf al-Qaradawi, both use new media either through satellite television or the internet to reach audiences from across countries. As researchers understand, Yusuf al-Qaradawi is a global mufti figure, not only because of the depth of his religious knowledge, but because of his social scope and influence supported by political and media networks that have a large role in his career. Moreover, al-Qaradawi as Warren said has the charisma to be a "guide" in terms of religious knowledge, fatwas and politics.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, it is not an exaggeration if al-Qaradawi's legitimacy is contested in certain countries such as Egypt (especially al-Azhar), Qatar and Saudi Arabia because of the geopolitics that separate Arab and Muslim countries.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, Ali Jum`ah as a figure who is compared to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, is an influential Muslim scholar in the global world. As a state mufti, his authority extends far beyond Egypt and keeps

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<sup>23</sup>Alexandre Caeiro, 'The Power Of European Fatwas: The Minority Fiqh Project And The Making Of An Islamic Counterpublic', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42.3 (2010), 435–49 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743810000437>>.

<sup>24</sup>See The International Union for Muslim Scholars, <http://www.iumsonline.net/english>. Accessed March 13, 2021.

<sup>25</sup>Ozgur Pala and Bulent Aras, 'Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in the Turkish and Qatari Foreign Policy on the Arab Spring', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, (2015). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2015.1063274>.

<sup>26</sup>David H Warren, 'The 'Ulamā' and the Arab Uprisings 2011-13: Considering Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the "Global Mufti," between the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic Legal Tradition, and Qatari Foreign Policy', 2014, 6. <<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.4789.6562>>.

<sup>27</sup>Belhaj, 'Beyond the Global Mufti: Religious Authority as Political Action', 10.

Islamic law relevant to the problems of contemporary human life. Through Dar al-Ifta Egypt, he modernized the process of issuing fatwas so that it could reach the entire world. Dar al-Ifta became a global institution that transcended the boundaries of location and time and became a role model for all fatwa issuing institutions in the world.<sup>28</sup> Ali Jum`ah played a key role in efforts to centralize religious authority and unify fatwas in the Muslim world.<sup>29</sup>

### Mufti and Online Activism

Yusuf al-Qaradawi's website with the domain name *al-qaradawi.net* is the first personal website of an `alim in Arabic and English. The subjects of the *al-qaradawi.net* website revolve around Islamic law related to the topics of medicine, family, women and economy, democracy, terrorism and interfaith dialogue. The global Islamic community (*al-umma al-islamiyya alamiyya*) has always been the core issue that must be protected and maintained in this website. The visitors to *al-qaradawi.net* website have a option to contact al-Qaradawi directly to ask his opinion as mufti. Visitors can also view and call upon the fatwas that have been provided in the section entitled "Fatwas and Decisions" (*fatāwa wa-ahkām*).

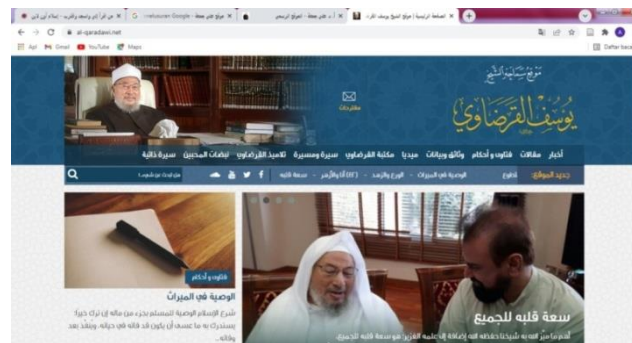


Figure 1. Appearance of the *al-qaradawi.net* website

Users can call up fatwas issued by al-Qaradawi based on twelve different categories with the following themes: Almsgiving (*al-zakat*), Hajj and Umrah (*al-hajj wa al-umrah*), Prayer (*al-ṣalat*), Fasting (*al-ṣiyām*), Creed and Supernatural (*aqā'id wa al-ghaybiyyāt*), Feasting (*al-ʿId*), Social Relations (*al-ʿalaqat al-ijtimā'iyya*), Women (*al-mar'ah*), Banking and Loans (*al-bunuk wa al-qurud*), Current Affairs (*al-ahdāth mu'āṣirah*), Knowledge, Da'wah, and Jihad (*al-ilm wa al-da'wah wa al-jihad*), and General Fatwas (*fatāwa ʿamma*). To date, most of the fatwas issued by *al-qaradawi.net* have been adopted directly from the archives of the internet portal *islamonline.net*.

<sup>28</sup>A Talk with Egypt Grand Mufti Dr. Ali Gomaa. Look at <https://eng-archive.aawsat.com/waleed-abdulrahman/interviews/a-talk-with-egypt-grand-mufti-dr-ali-gomaa>

<sup>29</sup>Ali Jum`ah initiated a number of conferences and symposiums on fatwa guidelines and a code of ethics binding on all muftis in the world. Among these conferences were the 2007 Conference organized by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Religious Affairs on fatwa-issuing in the world, the 2010 symposium held in Mecca by the Muslim World League on fatwa regulations, and the establishment of the International Islamic Commission for fatwa-issuing in the contemporary world. See Ibrahim Negm, *The Epistemology of Excellence: A Journey into the Life and Thoughts of the Grand Mufti of Egypt* (Beirut: Inno Vatio Publishing. Ltd, 2012), 41.

Apart from the *al-qaradawi.net* website, the *islamonline.net* website is one of the most visited Islamic web portals.<sup>30</sup> The *islamonline.net* website was launched online on June 24, 1999, and is controlled by the Al-Balagh Cultural Society.<sup>31</sup> The purpose of this site is to present a comprehensive Islamic character that can adapt to modern developments in all aspects.<sup>32</sup> This aims to ensure that Islamic legal rules and systems can complement each other based on justice, balance, tolerance, and humanism.<sup>33</sup>

The *islamonline.net* website provides various information about Islam, civilization, and contemporary issues, as well as important information in the twenty-first century. The website pages are available in Arabic and English, as their contents are intended for different general users.<sup>34</sup> Relating fatwas, one can visit “Fatwa Live” or “Fatwa Bank” through the “*Fiqh al-Muslim*” facility which archives fatwas issued by different ulama. The fatwas covered by this section cover several topics such as the Islamic view on Christmas celebrations, Islam and the environment, marital relations, jihad, medicine, parent-child and husband-wife relations, the Palestine crisis, Islam and sports, relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, and other issues. The image below is a screenshot of the *islamonline.net* web portal.

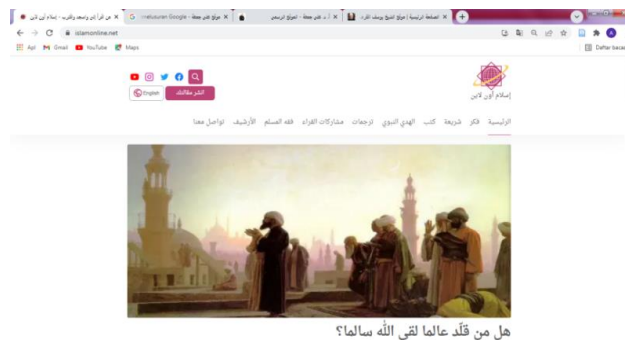


Figure 2. View of the *islamonline.net* web portal

The intellectual actor behind the site *islamonline.net* is the European Council for Fatwa and Research (EFCR), an organization that aims to provide religious guidance on Islamic law issues to Muslims who living in Europe in the form of fatwas.<sup>35</sup> as a manifestation of God's infinite love,

<sup>30</sup>In the August 2005 world wide ranking of Internet sites, IslamOnline ranked 596th in terms of hits. This put the site on roughly the same level as the news portal Aljazeera.net at 275th or The New York Times website at 155th. In the same month, IslamOnline ranked eighth among the top ten most visited Arabic-language websites worldwide. According to Alexa Traffic Rank in September 2007, the largest number of visits came from Egypt (21.4%), followed by the Palestinian Territories (11%), the United Arab Emirates (10.3%), Saudi Arabia (8.9%), and Morocco (8.7%). US-based users accounted for 2.1% of traffic volume and Germany and the UK each accounted for 0.9%.

<sup>31</sup>Graf, 'Media Fatwas, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi and Media-Mediated Authority in Islam', ORIENT : German Journal for Politics, Economics, and Culture of the Middle East, I. 2010.

<sup>32</sup>Abdel-Fadil, 'The Islam-Online Crisis: A Battle of Wasatiyya vs. Salafi Ideologies?', CyberOrient, 5.1 (2011), 4–36 <<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.cyo2.20110501.0001>>.

<sup>33</sup>Look at, <http://www.islamonline.net/English/AboutUs.shtml>. Accessed on January 28, 2022, at 19.15 WIB.

<sup>34</sup>Bettina Graf, 'Media Fatwas, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi and Media-Mediated Authority in Islam', ORIENT : German Journal for Politics, Economics, and Culture of the Middle East, I.2010.

<sup>35</sup>Alexandre Caeiro, 'The Power Of European Fatwas: The Minority Fiqh Project And The Making Of An Islamic Counterpublic', International Journal of Middle East Studies, 42.3 (2010), 435–49 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743810000437>>.



knowledge and wisdom.<sup>36</sup> The second actor is Yusuf al-Qaradawi whose mission is to promote the ideas of *wasatiyyah* (balance) and *i'tidāl* (moderation).

From the explanation above, can be concluded, that the emergence of online fatwas on the sites *al-qaradawi.net* and *islamonline.net* can be seen in the context of rapid change, and encourages the need to review traditional doctrines about the nature of moral relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. The first context includes the emergence of a global ethical discourse on universality and equality in citizenship, human rights and religious freedom, embedded in legal systems transplanted from Europe to countries in the Middle East. The second context is the global change in the form of mass migration of Muslims to the West. This encourages Muslims to introspect about their religiosity. The West not only maintains non-Islamic values and cultures, but also cultural and political systems that demand Muslim awareness such as equality, religious tolerance, universal citizenship. Muslims are required not only to know the local political system and rules, but also to obey them. This is the context of fatwa construction in *al-qaradawi.net* and *islamonline.net*. This context plays an important role in formulating the pillars of fatwa issuance. In this context, various fatwas on religion, politics, relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, gender and family issues, are constructed and disseminated through the websites *al-qaradawi.net* and *islamonline.net*.

On the other hand, there is Ali Jum`ah who is seen as a figure who has made a major contribution to Egypt especially and the modern Islamic world in general. The peak was when the public recognized him as the grand mufti of the Arab Republic of Egypt for the period 2003-2013. Since he was appointed as grand mufti in 2003, Ali Jum`ah has made several breakthroughs for the Dar al-Ifta institution in Egypt, such as modernizing the fatwa issuance process in Egypt, one of which is using technology and science as a means.<sup>37</sup> Egyptian people can submit a request for a fatwa on a problem via email on the official website *www.dar-ifta.org*.

Ali Jum`ah developed the official website *www.dar-ifta.org* in various methods, including by providing additional facilities, where on this site a large number of fatwas can be studied since the establishment of Dar al-Ifta until now. Another facility is through a search for the desired fatwa object, suggesting that people who want to send a letter first look at the fatwa bank on the site. This allows the questioner (mustafti) to get the desired answers without any hassle. By modernizing the institution with new media, Ali Jum`ah hopes that this site will provide a great service to Muslims in Egypt and the world.<sup>38</sup> The image below is a display of the *dar-alifta.org* web portal.

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<sup>36</sup>Rusli, 'Progressive Salafism in Online Fatwa', 206.

<sup>37</sup>Musthafa Ridha Azhari, Al Mujaddid Dr. Ali Jum`ah : Imamul Muftin Wa Khaamilu Liwail Muslihin (Qahiroh : Daar Rofi'i Lin Nasyr Wat Tauzi, 2019),501.

<sup>38</sup>Musthafa Ridha Azhari, Al Mujaddid Dr. Ali Jum'ah, 501.



Figure 3. View of the dar-alifta.org web portal

In addition, Ali Jum`ah has a personal page on *www.draligomaa.com*. Ali Jum`ah's website contains various information about Islam, civilization, nationalism, and current information. A number of articles displayed represent religious views in accordance with the capacity of Ali Jum`ah who has a background and capacity of knowledge in the world of Islamic law. The content of the *draligomaa.com* website is written in Arabic and English. Specifically, this website is not emphasized as a fatwa website but refers to the history of fatwa typology explained by Ansari that before being institutionalized in an institution, fatwas were more often sent to individuals who were considered to have adequate religious knowledge capacity.<sup>39</sup> This can be proven that Ali Jum`ah's writing or answer was based on the questions asked to him by Mustafafti. A very broad range of themes is discussed in the fatwa of Ali Jum`ah on his website, including those related to faith, worship, *mua`amalah maaliyah*, social and family relations, manners and morals, and so on. Although the contents of this website tend not to have a specific theme specification, it has become a concern for the public, especially Muslims. This shows that Ali Jum`ah tried to spread his ideas about his religious views through fatwas to all readers. The image below is a display of the *draligomaa.com* web portal.



Figure 4. View of the draligomaa.com website

In the context of Ali Jum`ah and Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the question that arises is how researchers place the symptoms or phenomena of personal fatwas carried out by the two figures, especially

<sup>39</sup>Isa Ansari, 'The Position of Fatwa in Several Muslim Countries (Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam and Egypt)', Analysis: Journal of Islamic Studies, 17.1 (2017), 137 <<https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v17i1.1790>>.

concerning the use of new media or online media as a basis for spreading their ideas. In this case, it is appropriate for researchers to quote Bryan S. Turner's opinion in *Religious Authority and The New Media*.<sup>40</sup> Bryan provides an interesting limitation regarding the categorization of *ulama* (religious leaders) that this title is closely related to the community's recognition of a person's capacity in the Islamic field. From the explanation above, the researcher asserts that the power of the traditional authority of an *ulama* (read: mufti) does not guarantee that his fatwa will be followed by the expected audience. However, with the use of new media, he can gain the sympathy of many people to follow what he says (his fatwa). The era of technology spurs both figures to participate in the contestation of ideas.

### Mustafti Global: Case Study Indonesia

In the Indonesian context,<sup>41</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradhawi's fatwas or ideas are often used as references by several *ulama* (individuals) or institutions, organizations, or political parties in Indonesia such as the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS), Muhammadiyah, Persis, and Baznas.<sup>42</sup> Al-Qaradawi's political thinking is acceptable and follows the conditions in Indonesia which consists of various groups, tribes, races, and religions.

Ratoni, a graduate of al-Azhar and a figure of the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) believes that among the inspiring fatwas and ideas of al-Qaradhawi is *al-fikru as-siyasi* (his political thinking). Departing from his thinking that Islam is *dinun syamilun* (a complete religion) that regulates all dimensions of life, including the political dimension. Al-Qaradhawi was so 'enthusiastic' in spreading his ideas, in fact, specifically al-Qaradhawi wrote a book about his political thinking entitled "*Min Fiqh al-Daulah fi al-Islām, Makānatuhā, Ma'ālimuhā, Ṭabī'atuhā*". Al-Qaradhawi's thinking in the political field has more or less influenced politics in Indonesia, especially Islamic politics represented by the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera. This party views that democracy is in line with the principles of deliberation taught by Islam. Other issues that stem from his thinking that influence this party include women's leadership,<sup>43</sup> where women are allowed to become members of the legislature, multi-party which is equated with differences in schools of thought in the world of Islamic jurisprudence, as well as a prohibition on abstaining from elections.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>BS Turner, "Religious Authority and the New Media", *Theory Culture & Society*, 24 (2), 2007, 119.

<sup>41</sup>To obtain data on the extent of the influence of the fatwas of the two figures in the Indonesian context. The author conducted in-depth interviews with several graduate of al-Azhar Egypt. The graduate that the author means are not direct students of the two figures, but those who usually adopt and spread the thoughts of the two figures, both Ali Jum`ah and al-Qaradhawi. This in-depth interview concerns their views (the graduate) on the two figures regarding the influence of their fatwas and how they relate them to the Indonesian context.

<sup>42</sup>Interview with Dr. Ratoni, Lc, M.Pd.I. at his residence, Monday, November 7, 2022. He is an graduate of Al-Azhar, S1 level, class of 1995. He currently serves as Chairman of the Regional Sharia Council (Regional Ethics Council) of the Regional Leadership Council (DPD) of PKS Brebes.

<sup>43</sup>See PK Sejahtera Central Sharia Council, *Fatwas of the Prosperous Justice Party Sharia Council* (Bandung: Harkatuna Publishing, 2006), 135.

<sup>44</sup>Ratoni Interview, Monday, November 7, 2022.

Another view on the influence of Yusuf al-Qaradhawi's fatwa in the Indonesian context was also conveyed by Mukhlis, an alumnus of al-Azhar class of 1995. According to him, al-Qaradhawi's ideas triggered the birth of sharia-based banks, a phenomenon that is quite encouraging, and many people are starting to move from conventional banks to banks labeled sharia.<sup>45</sup> One of the books written by al-Qaradhawi entitled "*al-Fawā'id al-Bunūk Hiya al-Ribā al-Muharram*", is the result of his thoughts in the field of economics (*al-Fikr al-Iqtisādī*) which inspired the birth of sharia-based banks in Indonesia. As stated by Mukhlis,<sup>46</sup> There are also fatwas of al-Qaradhawi adopted by the national zakat institution (BAZNAS). Zakat has a positive impact on reducing poverty and income inequality in society. According to him, the fatwas on zakat issued by BAZNAS mostly adopt from al-Qaradhawi's *zakat* jurisprudence.<sup>47</sup>

Based on the reality above, at least it can be emphasized that al-Qaradhawi's works in the form of fatwas, thoughts, and ideas have influenced the Islamic movement in Indonesia, especially in the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera and BAZNAS. From several facts, the researcher views Yusuf al-Qaradhawi as a global mufti. This is reflected in his fatwas which have an influence on the international world and beyond his own country. Al-Qaradhawi also gets a global audience (*mustafti*) from other countries (accepting his fatwas) in this context Indonesia.

In contrast to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Ali Jum`ah, whose authority extends far beyond Egypt, where he acts as the official interpreter of Islam and keeps Islamic law relevant to the problems of contemporary human life.<sup>48</sup> In Indonesia, Egyptian alumni and also activists of Aswaja Nusantara often refer to the opinions of Ali Jum`ah in responding to fiqh problems in Indonesia. His books entitled "*al-Bayān Limā Yasghal al-Adhḥān*", "*al-Kalim al-Tayyib Fatwa al-Aṣriyyah*" are the main references besides other works. In terms of fatwa, his fatwa generally has a big influence in Indonesia, especially regarding moderation.<sup>49</sup>

In addition works in the form of books, videos of Ali Jum`ah's easily accessible religious studies also strengthen the Aswaja tradition in the archipelago. One of the Youtube channels that often displays Ali Jum`ah's fatwas and opinions is *SanadMedia.com*. Portal *SanadMedia.com* is an Islamic media in Indonesia that tries to connect past, present and future literacy, and campaigns for an enlightenment movement through the slogan "read before speaking". *SanadMedia.com* often displays fatwas and views

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<sup>45</sup>PK Sejahtera Central Sharia Council, *Fatwas of the Prosperous Justice Party Sharia Council* (Bandung: Harakatuna Publishing, 2006), 121.

<sup>46</sup>Interview with Dr. KH. Mukhlis Syafiq, Lc, M.Ag. at his residence on Wednesday, November 23, 2022. He is an graduate of Al-Azhar, S1 level, class of 1995, and is one of the board of trustees at the Al-Hikmah 1 Islamic Boarding School in Brebes.

<sup>47</sup>Interview with Mukhlis, Wednesday, November 23, 2022.

<sup>48</sup>Negm, *The Epistemology of Excellence*, 5.

<sup>49</sup>Interview with Dr. KH. Mahmudi, Lc, MA. at his residence on Wednesday, November 23, 2022. He is an graduate of Al-Azhar from undergraduate to doctoral level, and is one of the board of trustees at the Al-Hikmah 1 Islamic Boarding School in Brebes.

of moderate Ahlu Sunnah scholars such as Habib Umar Hafidz, Sheikh Yusri Rusdi, Sheikh Mutawalli as-Sya`rawi, Sheikh Ali Jum`ah, Said Ramadhan al-Bhuti, and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar.<sup>50</sup>

In the context of Indonesia, Ali Jum`ah's fatwa is a reference, one of which is as reported on the *SanadMedia.com* page. Once Sheikh Ali Jum'ah received a question from an Indonesian who asked how to respond to the diversity that exists in Indonesia, especially in terms of the many religions. In more detail in this case, *mustafti* asked about the law of saying Merry Christmas and the issue of Christianization in Indonesia, because every year this issue is always hotly discussed in Indonesia.<sup>51</sup> On that occasion, Ali Jum`ah gave an answer (*fatwa*) allowing Christmas greetings, because this is part of *muamalah*. As Muslims, we are required to show commendable morals when interacting with anyone.<sup>52</sup>

### Conclusions

In social and political life, *ulama* has a central role. In line with the development of secularization and modernization, religious authority (*ulama*) experienced fragmentation and contestation. Ulama is no longer the main source of knowledge and legitimacy. Power is no longer exercised based on religious legitimacy but on the principles of citizenship and science and the use of technology. The findings presented show that both figures construct religious authority through new media in different ways. For Ali Jum`ah, through the Dar al-Ifta modernization program, its fatwas can be accessed via 24-hour telephone line, e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube and can be accessed on the website *www.dar-alifta.org*. Meanwhile, Yusuf al-Qaradawi is a global mufti figure. His fatwas and ideas have influenced many people in various parts of the world, including Muslims in Indonesia. Al-Qaradhawi collaborates with experts and various professionals in the media field. as exemplified by *www.islamonline.net* and *www.al-qaradawi.net*. For Ali Jum`ah and Yusuf al-Qaradawi, new media has an important role in building their authority.

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<sup>50</sup>Interview with Mahmudi, Wednesday, November 23, 2022.

<sup>51</sup>The full video of the fatwa "Sheikh Ali Jum'ah Answers the Problem of Merry Christmas and the Issue of Christianization in Indonesia" can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJllkSEnJF0>. Please note that in the video it is explained that penanya (mustafti) from Indonesia said that his country consists of many tribes and religions, the majority are Muslims, and the others consist of Christians, Buddhists, and there are also groups from other religions (beliefs). In Indonesia there are also still indigenous people who still believe in animism. He asked, to what extent is it permissible or permissible to say Merry Christmas to non-Muslims on the birth of Prophet Jesus AS. However, he (mustafti) also added that there (Indonesia) there is a Christianization mission that seeks to convert Muslims from their religion and turn them away from their religion. It should be noted that this Christianization has befallen us (Indonesia) since the 16th century AD.

<sup>52</sup>A more detailed and specific answer from Ali Jum`ah regarding the permissibility of giving Christmas greetings can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJllkSEnJF0>. Accessed November 8, 2022 M.

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