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Between Social Respect and Ritual Participation: Reading the 2024 MUI Ijtima' Ulama Decision through John Rawls's Public Reason

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Abstract: Decision No. 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024 of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) permits interreligious cooperation while restricting greetings and attributes associated with other religions' holy days, raising questions about the normative boundary between social respect and ritual participation. This article examines how the decision constructs that boundary and assesses its justifications through John Rawls's conception of public reason. Using qualitative, library-based normative document analysis and conceptual interpretation, it examines the decision's principles, provisions on religious celebrations, recommendations and scriptural grounds alongside Rawls's writings and relevant scholarship. The findings identify three connected normative commitments: protection of religious freedom, permission for social cooperation and separation of religious teachings and rituals. The decision distinguishes protective and cooperative tolerance from conduct it classifies as symbolic religious participation, while rejecting compelled festive expression. A Rawlsian reading shows that freedom of conscience, non-coercion, respect and civic cooperation can be justified through reasons accessible across religious commitments. Restrictions on festive greetings and attributes depend more closely on the MUI's theological interpretation of symbols. Such reasoning may guide Muslims internally but cannot alone justify coercive political rules affecting basic liberties. The article contributes a distinction between the internal authority of religious guidance and the public justification of its potential political application.
Keywords: Religious Tolerance; MUI Ijtima' Ulama; John Rawls; Public Reason; Ritual Participation.

Introduction

In Indonesia, the question of whether a religious greeting expresses social courtesy or religious affiliation exposes a contested boundary of tolerance. Studies of Muslim attitudes and international principles of

tolerance emphasise respect for religious difference,[1] while Rohman's research in Balun shows how shared spaces enable communities to practise their faiths and sustain peaceful relations.[2] Yet Dharta and colleagues demonstrate that the Indonesian Ulema Council's (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) position on interfaith greetings has generated tensions between social accommodation and the protection of religious identity.[3]

Indonesia's policy of religious moderation seeks to reconcile religious commitment with peaceful coexistence,[4] and Islamic legal scholarship identifies social harmony as a concern in a plural legal order.[5] Research on Persatuan Islam further indicates that social openness can coexist with theological orthodoxy.[6] The unresolved question, therefore, concerns how religious authorities identify the point at which permitted social interaction becomes unacceptable participation in another community's religious observance.

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[1] Hendro Prasetyo and Iim Halimatusa'diyah, "Examining Muslim Tolerance Toward Ordinary Non-Muslims: Social, Religious, and Political Tolerance in Indonesia," *International Journal of Sociology* 54, no. 2 (March 3, 2024): 112–31, doi:10.1080/00207659.2024.2301881; Yoan Affandi, Zulfadli Zulfadli, and Mhd Fajri, "Empirical Reassessment of Religious Tolerance in Padang City," *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi)* 11, no. 2 (December 31, 2025): 185–97, doi:10.18784/smart.v11i2.3304; UNESCO, "Declaration of Principles on Tolerance," November 16, 1995, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000101344.

[2] Muhammad Saifullah Rohman, "Negotiating the Space for Peace: Interreligious Tolerance and Harmony in Practice," *Journal of Indonesian Social Sciences and Humanities* 8, no. 2 (2018): 133–44.

[3] Firdaus Yuni Dharta et al., "MUI's Fatwa on Interfaith Greetings and Religious Tolerance: Can Indonesia Find a Middle Ground?," *Frontiers in Communication* 10 (2025): 1–10, doi:10.3389/fcomm.2025.1537568.

[4] Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019), 53–55, https://adminku.kemenag.go.id/public/data/files/users/5/MODERASI_BERAGAMA.pdf.

[5] Arif Sugitanata and Ihda Shofiyatun Nisa, "Analisis Maslahah Dalam Membangun Harmonisasi Pluralisme Hukum Pada Masyarakat Majemuk," *Al-Muqaronah: Jurnal Perbandingan Mazhab Dan Hukum* 2, no. 2 (2023): 69–77, doi:10.59259/am.v2i2.115.

[6] Erni Isnaeniah, Fitriya Nisa, and Falya Ihyana's findings on Persis Tanjungsari show that religious moderation can be practised in the social sphere through tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence, while still maintaining theological boundaries and religious orthodoxy. *See*: Erni Isnaeniah, Fitriya Nisa, and Falya Ihyana, "Religious Moderation in the Perspective of Religious Community Organizations of Persatuan Islam (PERSIS)," *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme* 8, no. 1 (2026): 1–14, doi:10.37680/scaffolding.v8i1.8014.

As an influential source of religious guidance for Indonesian Muslims, the MUI provides an important setting in which to examine this distinction.[7] Its Decision No. 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024 on Guidelines for Interreligious Relations, adopted at the Eighth National Ijtima' of its Fatwa Commission, addresses principles of interreligious relations, interfaith greetings and tolerance during other religions' holy days. This article concentrates on the latter provisions, read alongside the decision's general principles and legal grounds.[8] The decision recognises freedom of worship, permits cooperation in social affairs and prohibits insulting other religions, while drawing limits at festive greetings, the use of attributes associated with other religions' holy days and attempts to compel others to offer greetings or join celebrations. The analytical problem concerns how these permissions and restrictions distinguish social interaction from ritual participation, and the reasons used to defend that distinction.

Existing responses to MUI guidance have examined the tension between protecting Islamic belief and maintaining interreligious moderation.[9] That debate requires attention to the status of religious arguments in Indonesia's public sphere. Within the constitutional setting of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, religion remains publicly significant without any single religious interpretation becoming the exclusive basis of state authority.[10] Although the MUI's guidance addresses Muslims, its account of acceptable interreligious conduct may inform wider public debate. This raises questions about the grounds on which theological judgements can justify expectations extending beyond the community that accepts them.

John Rawls's account of public reason provides a framework for distinguishing these levels of justification. Public reason concerns the

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[7] Ahmad Insya' Ansori and Moh. Ulumuddin, "Kedudukan Fatwa MUI Dan Lembaga Fatwa Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Mahkamah* 5, no. 1 (2020): 37–56, doi:10.25217/jm.v5i1.755.

[8] *See*: Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Keputusan Ijtima' Ulama Komisi Fatwa Se-Indonesia VIII Nomor 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024 Tentang Panduan Hubungan Antarumat Beragama," May 31, 2024, https://fatwamui.com/storage/637/PANDUAN-HUBUNGAN-ANTARUMAT-BERAGAMA.pdf.

[9] Mohd Taufik Harun et al., "Eksklusivitas Ijtima'Ulama Komisi Fatwa MUI Tentang Salam Lintas Agama Perspektif Maqashid al-Syari'ah Dan Moderasi Beragama," *Al Muhkam: Journal of Islamic Law and Jurisprudence* 1, no. 2 (2025): 127–37, doi:10.65980/almuhkam.v1i2.45.

[10] Muchamad Ali Safa'at, "The Roles of the Indonesian Constitutional Court in Determining State-Religion Relations," *Constitutional Review* 8, no. 1 (2022): 113–50, doi:10.31078/consrev815.

justification of political decisions on constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice through reasons that citizens holding different comprehensive doctrines could reasonably accept.[11] The MUI decision is not an exercise of state power, and its theological reasoning need not meet the same requirements as coercive law. Rawls's framework becomes relevant when arguments from the decision are advanced to support rules affecting the rights and freedoms of citizens of different faiths. The distinction allows its internal religious coherence to be examined separately from the public justification of its prescriptions.

Research on Indonesian pluralism, religious moderation, fatwas and religious authority has examined the social and institutional settings of tolerance.[12] Other studies investigate tolerance in education and everyday social life.[13] These contributions provide important context, but do not directly establish how the 2024 decision links its general commitments to religious freedom and cooperation with specific restrictions on festive expressions, or whether the different justifications have comparable public reach. This article addresses that narrower doctrinal and conceptual gap

[11] John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples: With "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 132–126; John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Expanded edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 212–13.

[12] Nurman, Yusriadi Yusriadi, and Sufian Hamim, "Development of Pluralism Education in Indonesia: A Qualitative Study," *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 9, no. 3 (July 1, 2022): 106–20, doi:10.29333/ejecs/1207; Murdan Murdan, "Pluralisme Hukum (Adat Dan Islam) Di Indonesia," *Mahkamah: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 1, no. 1 (2016): 48–60, doi:10.24235/mahkamah.v1i1.573; Fradhana Putra Disantara, "Konsep Pluralisme Hukum Khas Indonesia Sebagai Strategi Menghadapi Era Modernisasi Hukum," *Al-Adalah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Politik Islam* 6, no. 1 (2021): 1–36, doi:10.35673/ajmpi.v6i1.1129; AM Janah, AU Hidayati, and S Maulidin, "Pengaruh Pemahaman Moderasi Beragama Terhadap Pembentukan Sikap Toleransi Siswa SMK Walisongo Semarang," *VOCATIONAL: Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan Kejuruan* 4, no. 2 (2025): 42–50, doi:10.51878/vocational.v4i2.4133; Andri Ashadi et al., "Community Tolerance: Relationship of Muslim Majority and Christian Minority in the Context of Religious Moderation in Padang Pariaman, West Sumatera," *Penamas* 35, no. 1 (2022): 113–30; Nur Huda, Ahmad Musonnif Alfi, and Nawal Nur Arafah, "Dua Fatwa Untuk Toleransi Beragama: Relasi Muslim Dan Nonmuslim Dalam Perspektif Nahdhatul Ulama," *Al-Qisthu: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu-Ilmu Hukum* 22, no. 2 (2024): 144–63, doi:10.32694/qst.v22i2.3656; Zulkifli Zulkifli, "The Ulama in Indonesia: Between Religious Authority and Symbolic Power," *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 37, no. 1 (2013): 180–97, doi:10.30821/miqot.v37i1.79.

[13] Lusi Nur Halimah and Warsiyah Warsiyah, "Implementasi Sikap Toleransi Sebagai Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Kehidupan Sosial Keagamaan Masyarakat Plural," *Al-Fikri: Jurnal Studi Dan Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 2 (2022): 131, doi:10.30659/jspi.5.2.131-141; Maitsaa Rifani Khoirunnisa, Munawar Rahmat, and Saepul Anwar, "Tingkat Toleransi Beragama Siswa SMA: Survei Pada Siswa Muslim Di SMA Negeri Kota Cimahi," *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi)* 8, no. 2 (2022): 191–204.

through two questions: how does the decision construct the limits of tolerance concerning other religions' holy days, and how can those limits be assessed through Rawls's public reason? It argues that differentiating social respect, public cooperation and ritual participation reveals both the internal structure of the ruling and the limits of translating its theological classifications into reasons for shared political life.

Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative, library-based approach combining normative document analysis and conceptual interpretation. Its primary source is Decision No. 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024 of the Eighth National Ijtima' of the Indonesian Ulema Council's Fatwa Commission on Guidelines for Interreligious Relations. The analysis concentrates on Section A concerning the Principles of Interreligious Relations, Section C concerning Tolerance in the Celebration of Other Religions' Holy Days, Section D containing Recommendations, and Section E setting out the Legal Bases. These provisions establish the normative relationship between religious freedom, social cooperation, ritual boundaries and restrictions on religious expression.[14] Secondary sources comprise John Rawls's *Political Liberalism* and *The Law of Peoples*, alongside scholarly literature on religious tolerance, pluralism, religious authority and MUI fatwas. Sources were selected according to their relevance to the research questions, academic authority and contribution to understanding the relationship between religious norms and public justification.

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, qualitative content analysis identified the decision's principal normative categories, including religious freedom, cooperation in *muamalah*, the prohibition of religious insults, restrictions on symbolic participation and protection against coercion. Second, these categories were examined relationally to establish how the decision distinguishes social respect and cooperation from conduct classified as ritual participation. Particular attention was given to the relationship between its general principles, specific restrictions, recommendations and supporting scriptural authorities. Third, the resulting construction was assessed through Rawls's theory of public reason, focusing on whether the reasons underlying particular provisions could be justified to citizens holding different religious commitments when

[14] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Keputusan Ijtima' Ulama Komisi Fatwa Se-Indonesia VIII Nomor 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024 Tentang Panduan Hubungan Antarumat Beragama."

invoked in shared political life.

Analytical consistency was maintained by tracing interpretations to specific provisions, comparing them with relevant scholarship and distinguishing the decision's explicit formulations from the article's conceptual interpretation. Rawls's framework was applied to assess the public justification of religious arguments without treating theological guidance as equivalent to coercive state law. Accordingly, this study does not measure public attitudes, behavioural effects or institutional implementation. Its findings are confined to the decision's normative structure and the extent to which its justifications can be understood within a plural democratic society.

Results and Discussion

The Construction of the Limits of Religious Tolerance in the MUI Ijtima' Ulama Decision on the Celebration of Other Religions' Holy Days

The MUI's Decision No. 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024 constructs religious tolerance through three connected normative commitments: recognition of religious freedom, permission for interreligious cooperation and separation of religious teachings and rituals. Section A(1)(a) affirms respect for adherents of other faiths and their freedom to practise religion according to their convictions. It grounds this position in *al-tasāmuh* (tolerance) and the Qur'anic principle *lakum dīnukum wa liya dīn*, while expressly rejecting the mixing of religious teachings. Religious difference is therefore recognised without requiring doctrinal agreement or participation in another tradition's worship.

Section A(1)(b) extends this recognition into *muamalah*, where differences of religion do not prevent cooperation in communal, national and civic affairs. This distinction corresponds to Mursyid's account of tolerance as compatible with Islamic norms governing social interaction with non-Muslims. Section A(2) further prohibits ridiculing, insulting or denigrating other religions, while Section A(3) rejects interference in, or the mixing of, their teachings.[15] Read together, these provisions permit sustained social relationships but distinguish respect for another religion from adopting its beliefs or ritual practices. The distinction is central to the more specific rules governing religious celebrations.

[15] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Keputusan Ijtima' Ulama Komisi Fatwa Se-Indonesia VIII Nomor 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024 Tentang Panduan Hubungan Antarumat Beragama."

Section C translates these general principles into the setting of other religions' holy days. After acknowledging that each religion celebrates its own religious occasions, Section C(2) requires Muslims to allow followers of other faiths to conduct their worship and celebrations without obstruction. Paragraph (2)(a) protects the exercise of worship according to the adherents' own beliefs, whereas paragraph (2)(b) permits cooperation in social affairs. These provisions support two related forms of tolerance. The first is protective, expressed through non-interference with others' religious observance; the second is cooperative, expressed through participation in shared social life. Both preserve interreligious relations while leaving theological affiliation distinct.

The limits appear in Section C(3), which identifies three practices as falling outside what the MUI considers justified religious tolerance: offering greetings on another religion's holy day, using attributes associated with its celebrations, and compelling another person to offer such greetings or participate in those celebrations. Section C(4) characterises these practices as forms of mixing religious teachings that could degrade or insult religion. The formulation is significant because it classifies activities commonly situated within everyday social exchange as potentially bearing religious meaning. The decision accordingly distinguishes allowing others to celebrate from adopting expressions associated with their celebrations. Yet the three practices are not identical: the first two concern the religious interpretation of words and symbols, whereas the third also concerns the coercion of another person's conduct.

The restriction on festive attributes follows an established line of MUI reasoning. Fatwa No. 56 of 2016 defines religious attributes in terms of identifiable signs connected with another faith's beliefs, worship or traditions.[16] Against this background, the 2024 decision treats the use of festive attributes as a potential form of symbolic religious participation. Its position on greetings similarly depends on construing a congratulatory expression as connected with religious observance, rather than automatically treating every greeting as ordinary courtesy. The decision

[16] This position is in line with MUI Fatwa Number 56 of 2016, which places religious attributes as the identity, distinctive features, or signs of a particular religion that are related to belief, ritual worship, and tradition. *See*: Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia Nomor 56 Tahun 2016 Tentang Hukum Menggunakan Atribut Keagamaan Non-Muslim," December 14, 2016, https://mui.or.id/storage/fatwa/c44e8717556c6478629c4b3e5f80ceb5-lampiran.pdf.

establishes the classification, but the distinction between social expression and ritual affiliation remains dependent on how the meaning of particular acts is interpreted.

The scriptural authorities in Section E explain how the MUI joins permission for social relations with restrictions on ritual involvement. Qur'an al-Mumtahanah [60]: 8 supports kindness and justice towards people who do not fight Muslims on religious grounds or expel them from their homes. Qur'an al-Kāfirūn [109]: 1–6, particularly its affirmation of religious distinction, is invoked to preserve separation in worship.[17] These texts perform different functions within the decision. The first establishes a positive basis for relations across religious boundaries; the second provides the theological rationale for maintaining distinct religious commitments. Their combination explains why the MUI authorises cooperation without treating the observances of different faiths as interchangeable.

Two further provisions sharpen this distinction. Qur'an al-Baqarah [2]: 256, cited in Section E(1)(c), rejects compulsion in religion. Within the decision's reasoning, this principle supports freedom for other communities to practise their faith and resistance to pressure on Muslims to express or perform another religion's observances. Qur'an al-Baqarah [2]: 42, cited in Section E(1)(g), is used to reject the mixing of truth and falsehood and therefore reinforces the separation of religious teachings. The first rationale addresses coercion; the second concerns doctrinal boundaries. Their different functions should remain visible when interpreting the three restrictions in Section C(3).

The decision also invokes Qur'an al-An'ām [6]: 108, which forbids insulting the objects of worship of other religions. This provision prevents theological separation from becoming a licence for disparagement. The MUI's construction therefore places reciprocal constraints on interreligious conduct: Muslims are directed to preserve the integrity of their religious practice while respecting the dignity and worship of others. Its governing distinction concerns permissible coexistence and cooperation on one side, and acts classified as mixing religious observances on the other.

This interpretation is consistent with Asrorun Ni'am Sholeh's explanation that tolerance should remain outside questions of creed, ritual worship and religious ceremonies. His examples of the relevant limits

[17] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Keputusan Ijtima' Ulama Komisi Fatwa Se-Indonesia VIII Nomor 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024 Tentang Panduan Hubungan Antarumat Beragama."

correspond to the decision's provisions on festive greetings, attributes and coercion.[18] A comparable distinction appears in scholarship on M. Quraish Shihab, which presents tolerance as respect for the religious freedom of others without requiring the acceptance of their beliefs as one's own.[19] These comparisons situate the ruling within a broader distinction between social relations and theological commitment.

The decision's recommendations make the boundary more explicit. Section D(3) calls on followers of other religions to respect Muslim convictions, while Section D(4) rejects compulsion to use another religion's attributes.[20] Across Sections A, C, D and E, the MUI combines protection of religious freedom and social cooperation with restrictions on symbolic participation. Its principal interpretative move is to assign religious significance to festive greetings and attributes, placing them outside acceptable tolerance. This classification, rather than a general rejection of interreligious contact, determines the decision's limits.

Symbolic Differentiation in the Limits of Religious Tolerance

The MUI decision's differentiation between social respect and ritual participation raises a question distinct from its internal doctrinal consistency: which of its reasons could justify arrangements binding citizens who do not share the same religious commitments? Its recognition of the freedom of other communities to worship, coupled with the principle *lakum dīnukum wa liya dīn*, establishes that religious difference need not prevent coexistence. This position is compatible with Rawls's recognition of pluralism as an enduring feature of a free society, although the MUI's affirmation of religious difference should not be equated with an endorsement of political liberalism. For Rawls, the challenge is to justify fundamental political arrangements to citizens whose reasonable comprehensive doctrines remain diverse.[21] The relevant issue is therefore the public standing of particular reasons, rather than whether a religious authority abandons its theological commitments.

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[18] Sean Filo Muhamad, "MUI Dorong Toleransi Beragama Selama Tidak Berkaitan Dengan Akidah," *Antara*, Mei 2024, https://www.antaranews.com/berita/4129062/mui-dorong-toleransi-beragama-selama-tidak-berkaitan-dengan-akidah.

[19] Setio Setio Budi, "Konsep Toleransi Menurut Quraish Shihab Pada Surah Al-Kafirun," *Al-Urwatul Wutsqo : Jurnal Ilmu Keislaman Dan Pendidikan* 3, no. 2 (March 31, 2023), doi:10.62285/alurwatulwutsqo.v3i2.48.

[20] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Keputusan Ijtima' Ulama Komisi Fatwa Se-Indonesia VIII Nomor 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024 Tentang Panduan Hubungan Antarumat Beragama."

[21] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, xxiv–xxvi, 36–37, 144.

The decision's permission for cooperation in *muamalah* provides a first point of connection with public reason. By allowing Muslims to engage with other religious communities in social and civic affairs, the MUI makes cooperation independent of shared doctrine.[22] Its prohibition on insulting or denigrating other religions similarly recognises an obligation towards people whose beliefs differ from one's own. Such provisions can be defended through reasons concerning freedom of religion, equal civic standing and peaceful coexistence. Their potential public justification does not depend on accepting the Qur'anic grounds from which the MUI derives them. This is a conceptual assessment of their justificatory reach, not evidence that the decision has shaped legislation or attracted public agreement.

A more demanding problem arises from the decision's treatment of festive expressions. Its acknowledgement of other communities' right to celebrate stands alongside the classification of holiday greetings and associated attributes as impermissible forms of religious mixing. For the MUI, such conduct acquires significance from its connection with another religion's observance. Yet the prohibition on compelling someone to offer greetings or participate in celebrations rests on a distinct consideration: the individual's freedom to refuse an expression regarded as religiously objectionable. Protecting that freedom is intelligible across religious traditions, since nobody should be compelled to affirm beliefs or perform expressions against conscience. Whether a greeting itself amounts to ritual participation is a different question. It depends on a religious assessment of the expression's meaning, which citizens outside the relevant interpretative tradition need not share.

This difference identifies the proper scope of Rawls's public reason. The MUI may legitimately address Muslims through scriptural reasoning when giving religious guidance. Rawls does not require every religious judgement or ordinary social conversation to be framed in political terms. His account concerns, principally, the justification of constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice when public political power is exercised.[23] Consequently, a Muslim's religious reason for declining a

[22] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Keputusan Ijtima' Ulama Komisi Fatwa Se-Indonesia VIII Nomor 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024 Tentang Panduan Hubungan Antarumat Beragama."
[23] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 212–217, 224–225; Rawls, *The Law of Peoples: With "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,"* 132–136, 143–144, 150.

festive greeting is not itself a failure of public reason. The justificatory threshold changes if that reason is invoked to support coercive rules affecting the basic liberties of others. In that setting, theological classification alone cannot establish a justification accessible to citizens with different convictions. The document's status as religious guidance must therefore remain analytically distinct from any hypothetical use of its arguments to support state coercion.

The decision's scriptural reasoning illustrates why this distinction matters. Qur'an al-Mumtahanah [60]: 8 supports kindness and justice towards non-hostile followers of other religions, whereas al-Kāfirūn [109]: 1–6 affirms the separation of worship. Neither passage explicitly resolves whether a festive greeting is a social courtesy or an act of religious participation. That conclusion requires an additional interpretative judgement linking particular words to ritual affiliation. The MUI adopts this classification for festive greetings and attributes. By comparison, its references to al-Baqarah [2]: 256 and al-An'ām [6]: 108 support opposition to coercion and religious insult, which can also be explained through principles of conscience and civic respect. The difference is not between valid and invalid Islamic arguments. It concerns the extent to which their political implications can be defended without presupposing the MUI's interpretation of religious symbols.

This finding clarifies the relationship between the 2024 decision and earlier controversies concerning pluralism. Basya's analysis of the 2005 MUI fatwa documents competing understandings of pluralism, particularly whether it should be regarded as a basis for coexistence or as a threat to religious conviction.[24] Hasyim likewise situates the MUI within post-Reformasi debates over religious authority and resistance to theological pluralism.[25] The 2024 decision reflects a related concern with maintaining doctrinal distinctions, but its provisions also affirm freedom of worship, non-interference and social cooperation. It should therefore be assessed through the specific boundary it draws around religious expressions, rather than treated as a general refusal of religious diversity.

[24] Muhammad Hilaly Basya, "The Concept of Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: A Study of the MUI's Fatwa and the Debate among Muslim Scholars," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 1, no. 1 (2011): 69–93, doi:10.18326/ijims.v1i1.69-93.
[25] Syafiq Hasyim, "Majelis Ulama Indonesia and Pluralism in Indonesia," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 41, no. 4–5 (2015): 487–95, doi:10.1177/0191453714566547.

Dharta and colleagues identify the tension between social courtesy and religious identity in debates surrounding MUI guidance on interfaith greetings.[26] The 2024 decision brings this tension into sharper focus by treating greetings on other religions' holy days as expressions capable of crossing ritual boundaries.[27] Its distinctive feature lies in making the religious meaning attributed to an ordinary-looking expression decisive for the scope of tolerance. This is also the point at which internal religious classification and publicly shareable justification become most difficult to align: a greeting may be interpreted differently by those who offer it, receive it or assess it through a religious legal framework. The MUI's interpretation explains the prohibition for its intended religious audience, but does not by itself settle the expression's meaning for all citizens.

Existing scholarship on Indonesian pluralism, legal diversity, religious moderation, MUI fatwas and religious authority provides the institutional context for this debate.[28] Studies of tolerance in social and educational settings further demonstrate that tolerance is investigated through practices and attitudes as well as religious norms.[29] The present analysis contributes a different distinction. It separates the authority of a religious body to define conduct for its members from the kinds of reasons needed to justify political restrictions in a society of citizens with different beliefs. This prevents public reason from being used as a test of theological correctness, while also preventing theological guidance from automatically acquiring the status of public justification.

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[26] Dharta et al., "MUI's Fatwa on Interfaith Greetings and Religious Tolerance: Can Indonesia Find a Middle Ground?"

[27] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Keputusan Ijtima' Ulama Komisi Fatwa Se-Indonesia VIII Nomor 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024 Tentang Panduan Hubungan Antarumat Beragama."

[28] Nurman, Yusriadi, and Hamim, "Development of Pluralism Education in Indonesia: A Qualitative Study"; Murdan, "Pluralisme Hukum (Adat Dan Islam) Di Indonesia"; Disantara, "Konsep Pluralisme Hukum Khas Indonesia Sebagai Strategi Menghadapi Era Modernisasi Hukum"; Janah, Hidayati, and Maulidin, "Pengaruh Pemahaman Moderasi Beragama Terhadap Pembentukan Sikap Toleransi Siswa SMK Walisongo Semarang"; Ashadi et al., "Community Tolerance: Relationship of Muslim Majority and Christian Minority in the Context of Religious Moderation in Padang Pariaman, West Sumatera"; Huda, Alfi, and Arafah, "Dua Fatwa Untuk Toleransi Beragama: Relasi Muslim Dan Nonmuslim Dalam Perspektif Nahdhatul Ulama"; Zulkifli, "The Ulama in Indonesia: Between Religious Authority and Symbolic Power."

[29] Halimah and Warsiyah, "Implementasi Sikap Toleransi Sebagai Nilai Pendidikan Islam Dalam Kehidupan Sosial Keagamaan Masyarakat Plural"; Khoirunnisa, Rahmat, and Anwar, "Tingkat Toleransi Beragama Siswa SMA: Survei Pada Siswa Muslim Di SMA Negeri Kota Cimahi."

The decision thus contains reasons with different capacities for public justification. Religious freedom, non-interference, cooperation, protection against insult and resistance to coerced expression can be articulated through civic principles that do not depend on accepting Islamic doctrine. Restrictions on festive greetings and attributes, by contrast, turn on the MUI's interpretation of symbolic participation. Such restrictions may remain authoritative within the community that accepts its guidance, but their wider political justification cannot be presumed. Symbolic differentiation is therefore the key finding: the MUI preserves space for social coexistence while drawing a doctrinal boundary around particular religious expressions, and Rawls's public reason helps identify where that boundary's justification can, and cannot yet, reach beyond the religious community.

Conclusion

This article finds that Decision No. 02/Ijtima' Ulama/VIII/2024 constructs limits on religious tolerance without categorically rejecting interreligious relations. Its provisions recognise freedom of worship, protection against religious insults and cooperation in *muamalah*, while excluding greetings on other religions' holy days and the use of festive attributes from permissible tolerance. They also prohibit compelling others to offer greetings or participate in celebrations. The resulting boundary between social respect and ritual participation depends on the MUI's classification of particular words and symbols as religiously significant.

Read through Rawls's public reason, these provisions rest on reasons with differing capacities for public justification. Freedom of conscience, non-coercion, mutual respect and civic cooperation can be defended across religious commitments. Restrictions on festive greetings and attributes depend more closely on theological judgements that other citizens need not share. Such reasoning remains appropriate to the decision's role as religious guidance for Muslims, but cannot alone justify coercive public rules affecting basic liberties. The article's contribution is to distinguish the internal authority of a religious ruling from the public justification required for its possible political application. As a normative-conceptual study, it makes no claim about compliance with the decision or its effects on interreligious relations.

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