

**From Passive Tolerance to Equal Religious Citizenship:  
Reframing Religious Tolerance in Indonesia**

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**Abstract**

The recent violent disruptions of Christian retreats in Sukabumi and Padang (2025) starkly expose the fragility of religious coexistence in Indonesia. Despite its celebrated reputation for tolerance, prevailing practice often reflects *passive tolerance*—a conditional permission granted by the majority rather than an inherent right. This sustains asymmetric power relations between religious groups, leaving minorities vulnerable to societal prejudice and restrictive state regulations, most notably the 2006 Joint Ministerial Decree on the establishment of places of worship.

Although the state's policy of religious moderation has been promoted nationwide through strategic, multi-stakeholder programs, the fundamental right of citizens to freely practice their faith remains inadequately protected. Safeguarding the right to worship is not merely a religious policy—it is an affirmation of Indonesia's constitutional promise, national dignity, and social cohesion. Ensuring that all houses of worship stand free from fear is essential for realizing unity grounded in justice, equality, and mutual respect.

This presentation advocates a paradigm shift: from passive tolerance to *equal religious citizenship*, as mandated by Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion and obliges the state to protect all faiths equally. Central to this vision is the concept of *religious civility*—an active ethic of mutual protection, empathy, and solidarity—rooted in local traditions such as *pela gandong*, *menyama braya*, and *gotong royong*. Education is key to cultivating this ethic, particularly through initiatives like a “Curriculum of Love” that instils respect for religious diversity from an early age. The paper concludes by underscoring the urgency of genuine, rights-based initiatives to secure enduring religious harmony in Indonesia.