

# **Social Injustice And Problem Of Human Rights In Indonesian Baha'is Community<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper will explore the issue of human rights as well as social injustice dealing with religious life in Indonesia. As a new religious movement started in 1920s, the Baha'i community, as also one of the minority religions in Indonesia, engages with social and political dynamic vis a vis with Muslim majority group. Marginalization circumstance embedded to Baha'i community becomes a questionable phenomenon especially since Sukarno's collapse. For instance, in 1970s there were many Baha'i followers in-prisoned because it is claimed as a misleading faith in Indonesia. The five principle points so-called PANCASILA in this position finally invites several matters, for example the first principle which is declared as 'believe in one God' to unite all different religious groups is problematic for some non-official religious groups such as Baha'i and other indigenous religions. The dynamic religious life in Indonesia recently has been experiencing change in term of religious freedom. Since Suharto's fall, religious conflicts have increased in several places like the case in West Java between Muslim and Ahmadiyah, Poso-Moluccas between Muslim and Christians, etc. In this context, human rights, as the agent of humanity issue, tries to look at the matter of discrimination faced by minority group particularly Baha'i community regarded as a misleading religious group. Furthermore, this paper will examine how human rights is applied into social and political reality. Finally, it will focus on exploring two prominent questions: firstly, what kind of social and political discrimination faced by Baha'i community after Sukarno's collapse is. Secondly, what is the political and social consequence faced by Baha'i follower, and how the do the survival strategy among majority groups.*

**Keywords: Baha'i community, discrimination, minority, and human rights.**

## **A. Background**

Religion, particularly in Indonesia, has become the most important element in the matters of social and political identity. Nevertheless, religion and state are not separated one to another in Indonesia as a nation. State or government puts religion and its symbols as a power relation to deal with domination practice; therefore government has control tightly towards religion<sup>3</sup>. This research describes and focuses on minority group related to religion, Baha'i in East Java. The Baha'i faith, as the youngest religion; which has small number of the followers in Indonesia, has faced social and political

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<sup>3</sup> Maliki, Zainuddin, 2000, *Agama Rakyat Agama Penguasa*, Yogyakarta: Galang Press

marginalization. This matter tries to explore narratively on minority group; which deliberately showed to public sphere on how Baha'i community, as new religious movement in Indonesia, exists since 1970s under state pressure.

The observation proved that Baha'is<sup>4</sup> have misplaced their privileges as Indonesian citizen. The lack of government attention to religious freedom occurs in our society. Religious freedom is still rarely seen in Indonesia. Under Suharto leadership, the government offices frequently monitored and determined that certain religious teaching was endangering the community<sup>5</sup>. Since 1975, Baha'i has been cultivated intangibly in East Java particularly in Banyuwangi which is located close to Bali Island. In addition, it gains significant growth in term of numbers of followers. Through the fatwa of Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI)<sup>6</sup> this religion is banned to develop in the Indonesia.

The teaching of Baha'i faith was founded by Baha'ullah in 1863 in Persia or Iran<sup>7</sup>. For Baha'is, Baha'ullah is their prophet who brought its teaching to reform the way of lives so-called religion into modern world. The history of Baha'i appearance in Indonesia in 1920s was started in Mentawai (Sumatera) and it continuously develops in other islands such as Borneo, Java, Bali, etc. According to the history, the founder of Baha'i Indonesia is Iranian, he was a doctor, and he came to Mentawai working voluntarily for poor people. From time to time, he succeeded to convey Baha'i faith as new religious movement in Indonesia. In some Asian and European countries, Baha'i has many followers. Baha'i has spread in 190 countries, 45 self-governing area and 126.904 cities in all over the world. Besides in Arabic, the holy book of Baha'i is translated within 802 languages<sup>8</sup>.

In relation with religion and human rights in Indonesia, the primary part will analyze this project into three deliberations, and these are firstly-state or government, secondly-religion; which is Baha'i, and thirdly-Baha'i community as part of minority group in Indonesia. Those three elements will become important point to distinguish the

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<sup>4</sup> The term of Baha'is means the follower of Baha'i religion.

<sup>5</sup> Juwana, Hikmahanto, 2006, *Human Rights In Asia: A Comparative Legal Study Of Twelve Asian Jurisdiction*, France And The USA, Routledge: New York

<sup>6</sup> MUI (Majelis Ulama Indonesia) or Indonesian Ulama Council which was established in 1975 in the era of Suharto.

<sup>7</sup> Momen, Mojan, 2002, *The Baha'i Faith: A Short Introduction*, England, Oxford: Oneworld

<sup>8</sup> excerpted from Baha'i International Community Book, p.24

problem of human rights and social justice. This study tries to be careful to not claim that problem of human rights comes from government itself.

## **B. Human Rights As The *Ijtihad*<sup>9</sup> Concept**

Indeed, the paradigm of human rights is to promote religious freedom for all human beings. Although the issue of human rights is perceived as concepts that are less rooted in the society but it does not mean that human rights is not applicable in social life. Human rights declarations in the United Nations (UN) convey significant result on social and political dynamic. The role of religion in human rights preferably contributes human values, which should be able to promote peaceful life. Likewise, such role enhances important point to create good harmony for lives.

Dealing with the issue of Baha'ism in Indonesia, it contains ethnicity issue as well as social class that sometimes brings problem of social injustice and human rights and thus this reason commonly triggers conflicts. According to Lerner, tragic events that demonstrate the powerful influence of ethnicity and religion, and in some cases require the intervention of massive international force, are but additional proof that religion plays a weighty role in xenophobia, racism, group, hatred, and even territorial changes<sup>10</sup>. Further more, religious persecution and conflicts between believers and non-believers; between different groups in multi-religious societies; between dominating, protected, or preferred religions and religious minorities; and concerning newly established religions, are all common phenomena.

At the level of religious freedom, this assumes that human rights as the concept of *ijtihad* attempts to elaborate the significant of humanity value bringing peace for all religious different groups. The essence of *ijtihad* in term of human rights is to create peace building, conflict resolution, and religion tolerance by campaigning religious freedom for all human beings. All religions confess human rights as the basic of humanity value; therefore all religion prevents and rejects violence. There is no reason to

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<sup>9</sup> The literal meaning of *ijtihad* is to strive with one's total ability and efforts to reach a goal which in this case is to endeavor to deduce the divine laws of shari'a to reliable sources and proofs. See <http://www.islamic-laws.com/articles/ijtihad.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> Lerner, Natan, 2006, *Religion, Secular Beliefs And Human Rights*, Martinus Nijhoff: Leiden

support or create religious war. The purpose of *ijtihad* of human rights is to liberate binary opposition between right and left, black and white, western and eastern, poor and rich, true and wrong. This perceives all human beings are the same, all human being living on the same earth. Human rights never distinguished the difference of race, religion, ethnicity, and social class. Every human has individual rights and that is 'faith'. This is why when Indonesian government banned Baha'i faith to develop in this country is not fit with basic principle of human rights. Human rights is set of individual collective rights that has been formally promoted and protected through the international and domestic law since the UN declaration of human rights in 1984<sup>11</sup>. Hence, human rights is protected under the international law. Religious violence affected on human violation is totally prevented by the international law.

### **C. Religion And Democracy**

This part deals with two paradigms in order to perceive minority religion in the case of Baha'i community. Since 1970s, Baha'is has faced prominent problem about identity. The human rights perspective as paradigm and theory is an essential framework to zoom out the reality of Baha'is lives. This context denotes that citizenship rights is the link between an individual rights as well as state. According to Marshall, there are at least three components on thinking citizenship, three kinds of human rights, and these are right to freedom of speech, the right to own property, and the right to take part in political process<sup>12</sup>. Basic problem of democracy transition in Indonesia is still questionable.

Indeed, religion and citizenship rights do not aim to emphasize that there is problem with 'religion' as social or political movement in Indonesia. Social critic towards government within making policy of religion jurisprudence in Indonesia causes impact of religious intolerance in the society. Center for religious and cross-cultural studies (CRCS)-Gadjah Mada University that concerns with the issue of religion in Indonesia in public policy has reported that lately Indonesia becomes intolerance state. The policy of six official religions helped to construct the perception that other religions

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<sup>11</sup> Landman, Todd, 2006, *Studying Human Rights*, Routledge: London

<sup>12</sup> Chesterman, John, 1997, *Citizens Without Rights: Aboriginies And Australian Citizenship*, Cambridge Univerity Press: United Kingdom.

or beliefs do not deserve to exist or develop equally<sup>13</sup>. The administration law on population no.23/2006, article 8 paragraph 4, classified exceptions with regard to two religious groups: "...procedure of the registration of important events for those inhabitants whose religion has yet to be acknowledged as a religion based on the provision of legislative regulations or for belief group..." (*ibid*, p. 16).

### **1. Problem Of National Identity**

Indonesia has multi-meaning approach to define what religion is because the administration law has classified two religious groups meaning that there are six official religions recognized by government such as: Hindu, Buddhist, Islam, Catholics, Christianity, and Kong Fuchu. The six official religions in this country may develop and grow up among society, and the others so-called non-official religions like indigenous religion, Judaism community, Baha'is community, etc. may not develop in Indonesia because these are considered to be a misleading faith.<sup>14</sup> It shows that Baha'i community may not have national identity card when they do not write down the one of the six official religions in the form of identity card. Religion as identity; which embeds into the concept of national building since the fall of Sukarno's regime becomes important tool to unity political ideology as well as power relation. This happened because Indonesian government escapes the communism related to the 'myth' of atheist ideology. Religion in Indonesia has enhanced the battle of political supremacy, class social, and gender in the colonial period. In addition, it seems that religion has become a power contestation of which the role of government is absolutely important element to distinguish 'religion' as individual matter and 'religion' as political function. Such political suspicion is the most reasonable fact to set column of religion in the Indonesian identity card after the fall of Sukarno regime. This period of 'liberal democracy' was portrayed by both Sukarno and Suharto as one of chaos and instability, based on competition between self-serving personal interests mobilizing regional, religious and ethnic conflict<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> CRCS, 2009, *Annual Report: Religious Life In Indonesia*, Yogyakarta

<sup>14</sup> In many cases, there were religious purifications conducted by the ministry of religious affair. Government will only recognize the six official religions, otherwise citizen will not get their civil rights such as identity card, health insurance, birth certificate, etc.

<sup>15</sup> Eldridge, Philip J., 2002, *The Politics Of Human Rights In Southeast Asia*, Routledge: London And New York

Suharto and his close colleagues who had been the prominent actor of Sukarno fall tried to custom religious identity within *KTP* to control separatist movements such as communists. Suharto and those who were close to him realized very soon after the coup that an opportunity had arisen not simply to eliminate the PKI and to seize power but to restructure Indonesian politics so that a political order such as Guided Democracy need never emerge again<sup>16</sup>. It demonstrates that the different forms of Indonesian identity card (*KTP*) have different meaning and every forms portrait each character of different regime, therefore politics as well as religion in Indonesia could not be separated. The temptation at this point to address today's religio-political radicals in the words of the man who dubbed religion the "opiate of the masses" cannot be resisted<sup>17</sup>.

## **2. Cemetery Ceremony, Legal Marriage, Health And Education Rights**

Another matter experienced by Baha'i community in East Java is that when their family died they may not bury in the public graveyard. Baha'i community must have their own graveyard, because religious clergies do not allow Baha'i families to be buried in the public space. In 2002, there was *fatwa haram* for Baha'is to have their relative buried in the area of public. Issues related to social injustice are that every Baha'is is not allowed to marry legally in the civil register if they do not engage with one of the six official religions in the form of registration. Likewise, the matter of official administration, Baha'is has problem of birth certificate for their babies. In summary, Baha'is cannot avoid the column of religion in every administration business. This case shows that domination of majority groups hires Baha'is as the 'others' and it means that people who do not engage with official religion they should be removed from society. The standard of 'good citizen' is when they belong to official religions.

During reformation era, government has been offering education as well as health aid for society particularly under SBY leadership. Yet, it is unfair when government provides health and education aid only for certain groups. Beside economic poverty as the requirement to get these aids from government, official religion also becomes one of

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<sup>16</sup> Cribb, Robert, 1990, *The Indonesian Killings Of 1965-1966*, Aristoo Press: Victoria

<sup>17</sup> Brown, L. Carl, 2000, *Religion And State: The Muslim Approach Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press

the requirements requested by government. It seems that category of citizen which has rights to get health as well as education aids is only provided and offered for those who engage with official religion, this happens because minority groups such as Baha'is tend to be invisible community in which statistical data are not able to track these groups. In this context, Indonesian government has been violating the international law; which obligates that "Governments have an obligation of non-discrimination, which requires that in all their actions they do not discriminate against individual or groups on the basis of a number of characteristics, including ethnicity, religion, belief, sex or property. Thus, for example, if a government excludes (by policy or practice) the children of a specific ethnic group from access to primary education, it would be violating this obligation"<sup>18</sup>.

In addition, it had been found a case in East Java where some of the Baha'is daughters were not allowed to study in the public school, because they are Baha'is. It happened because each student has to put their official religion in the administrative form when they register for the school. In such a way, schools make data for the student about their religion. Some Baha'is reported that in fact some public schools in the district level forbids Baha'is to enter state school. In 2008, one of the stories is that there is a case of Baha'is students had been rejected to study in junior high school.

#### **D. Baha'is As Minority Group**

Different from Suharto era, Abdurrahman Wahid as the third president of Indonesia, in the matter of religion and belief, has declared religious freedom for Indonesian citizen. Through his policy, Abdurrahman Wahid allowed Baha'is to continue religious activities in Indonesia as religious organizations and religious community. He leaded state in which inter-faith tolerance must be campaigned in order to create peace effort within religious society. However, new order government left shallow legacy to determine religion in Indonesia. Religious tolerance and pluralism campaign become positive response for Baha'is as minority group. Yet, the accomplishment of Abdurrahman Wahid as president in supporting religious pluralism in Indonesia becomes

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<sup>18</sup> IHRP, Institute Of International Education, 2010, *Reading The Books: Government's Budgets And The Rights To Education*, Washington

controversial issue for Islamist organizations. In his speech, in 2001 he declared religious freedom and he allowed Baha'i to continue their existence as religious movement.

### **1. *Abdurrahman Wahid And Public Hero For Baha'is***

One of the case concerning discrimination towards Baha'is was in Pati, Central Java. In 1990s, there was prejudice from local government of Pati, which was addressed to the Baha'is community in Pati, in such a way that Baha'is has reported religious discriminations to the Nahdlatul Ulama Council (PBNU) in Jakarta. Nonetheless, as the leader of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Abdurrahman sent an official letter to the local government and he said that actually Baha'i faith is not misleading, and every Baha'is follower has the same rights with others. Through the letter, it consisted of appeal that Abdurrahman Wahid enquired to free Baha'is from every intimidation, he also asked the local government of Pati to end social prejudice; which created social disintegration<sup>19</sup>. Religious discrimination happening towards minority groups in Indonesia is still problematic from time to time. The fight against prejudice and discrimination is most likely to take place in area where they are the most overt and intentional<sup>20</sup>. Human right violation, religious violence, and religious conflict is potentially happened in everywhere since reformation era, although many NGOs concern to support religious pluralism.

Problem of discrimination, minority, and intergroup relation is viewed as the classification of society; which is distinguished by criteria between rich and poor, west and east, black and white, men and women, true and wrong, and so on. According to Theodorson, discrimination is the way of treating unequally and it is usually addressed to an individual or group. In addition, such discrimination is based on categorical matters such as race attribute, gender, religion, ethnicity, social class, etc.<sup>21</sup>. Different from Theodorson, United Nations (UN) has another definition on discrimination, and it is defined that discrimination includes measures; which create inequality. Theodorson's opinion also involves minority group on his study, and he argues that minority groups are

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<sup>19</sup> Wahid, Abdurrahman, 1990, *unpublished manuscript of PBNU*, Jakarta, December 1.

<sup>20</sup> Berelson, Bernard, And Salter, Patricia J., 1964, *Majority And Minority In Americans: An Analysis Of Magazine Fiction, The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 10. No. 2, J.Stor.

<sup>21</sup> Heater, Derek, 1999, *What Is Citizenship*, Cambridge, U.K, Polity Press

groups categorized by different class, religion, race, as well as ethnicity which experiences losses as social and political prejudice impact.

## **2. *Survival Strategy, Social And Political Consequence***

Although Baha'is community lost their rights as citizen, they have specific characteristic in defending their survival. As one of the minority groups, Baha'is community has the problem of political and social consequences<sup>22</sup>, and they have attempted to survive, for instance when they face unequal treatment, prejudice, social and political discrimination from society they prefer to be silent. Basically, Baha'is community is such obedient citizens in which they always obey every rule from local government, respect the others, and maintain social solidarity in order to be accepted by society. Although they face social and political discrimination they still involve in social organizations voluntarily. The leadership model of Baha'is tends to be moderate to accept different group this is why Baha'i is called as unity religion. Baha'is leaders also involve with social activities although they are under government pressure. This phenomena show that in the theoretical view of survival strategy is that 'her or his ability to mediate and communicate with others was key to dis-mantling an explosive situation when he or she was under social pressure.<sup>23</sup>

## **3. *Citizenship Rights***

Derek Heater defines citizenship as the pursuit of one's private life and interests more comfortably because that private life is guaranteed by state protected rights.<sup>24</sup> In this term, citizen rights in deciding religious belief should be protected by law. Citizenship refers to membership in a political community, and hence designates a relationship between individual and state. This study needs to emphasize that citizen rights are not addressed certain groups, but it should be specified for individual rights.

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<sup>22</sup> Political and social consequence in this term means that Baha'is generally assume that they have problem with social neighborhood interaction because they are prejudiced as 'red' people which mean they are like communist. This is why Baha'is become invisible missionary groups. They narrow social interaction. Somehow, model of social neighborhood interaction between minority and majority group looks unequal in which majority society will be more dominant as social consequence that must be faced by minority group. Meanwhile, in term of political consequence, Baha'is community does not have space to involve with political party. Although the Baha'i teaching does not allow its followers to engage with political party, it the rights for all citizens to join with political party, but for Baha'is it will never happen to have leader from Baha'i.

<sup>23</sup> Billie Sudbrack, And Sarah Trombley, 2007, *Lost: A Survival Guide to Leadership Theory*, Sage

<sup>24</sup> Heater, Derek, 1999, *What Is Citizenship*, Cambridge, U.K, Polity Press

The citizenship concept will make assumptions about government policy as well as individual rights.

Political and social consequences experienced by Baha'is community are that they are not allowed to build their worship place. When the government held general elections, Baha'is community was not able to join with political party because they were a Baha'is. It is not only in general elections but also in local leader election (*pilihan lurah*) in villages Baha'is may not become leader in society. This happens because to be leader or member of political party has to embrace official religion. By those phenomena, it seems that there is an underlying fairness to promote human and citizenship rights in this country.

#### **D. The Baha'i Faith: Way Of Life**

Baha'i community has the different understanding of faith and they apply Baha'u'llah's principle in their daily life. The tolerant teachings of the Baha'i religion are a unity to all human beings in the whole world. In individual and plural society, Baha'ullah commands to avoid conflict dealing with ethnicity, religion, race, and social class. Every Baha'is should be friendly to all of peoples and Baha'i teaching forbids enmity because it causes war and obstructs peace process. Gender equality is also a part of important teaching in the Baha'i religion and it recognizes that women should have the same role in every place, time, generation, and moment. In the Baha'i teaching, women have to be important part to make policy not only in domestic but also in public area because women give birth to their children as young generation so they are the main figure in teaching their children. Therefore Baha'ullah emphasizes in holly book, *Al Aqdas*, and he recognizes that women are regarded as prerequisite of world peace and by this is the reason why every human being should respect towards women.

The purpose of the Baha'i teaching is transformation process to cultivate the spiritual matter, because spirituality encourages human being to be cultivated with social lives. In the Baha'i teaching, transformative learning of spirituality should be practiced in daily life to create a balance in social life. According to Tisdell, "spirituality has to do with a personal belief and experience of a higher power or higher purpose"<sup>25</sup>. Relating to

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<sup>25</sup> Tisdell, 2003, *Exploring Spirituality and Culture in adult and higher education*", San Francisco, CA,

spirituality, the main aim of the Baha'ullah in developing his teaching is peaceful life so all Baha'i adherents should always transform their spiritual quality and social relationship among other religious followers to be better.

*“Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body-awarenesses, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy”<sup>26</sup>.*

Baha'i teaching represents religious diversity in the world in which Islamist groups denies such dogma and labels it as misleading teaching. Baha'i religion came from one of the Islamic sects, *syi'ah*, and it continues principles of Islamic value widely. Baha'i teaching responses modernity and globalization as period change in which culture, language, economy and other social aspects are united on 'single place'. Accepting socio-cultural diversity should be priority in social life as peaceful process among religious society and that is why Baha'i faith can receive all concepts of religions as comprehensive lesson of the Baha'i teaching. Then, spirituality is not only practiced within individual life but also within social life in order to be a perfect human. In other words, creating good relationship to all human beings is also important like creating good relationship with God. Basically, Baha'i faith does not deny modernity as well as globalization and Baha'i faith views that globalization and modernity are as natural cycle which should be faced. Economical matter also becomes priority teaching in the Baha'i faith; and it encourages its adherents to actively grow their economy level since it becomes the prominent resource of the modernity life. Peter Beyer (1994) argues in religion and globalization that “religious communities may follow one of two options if they are to continue having a public role: the liberal or the conservative option. In brief, the liberal option is to embrace particular aspect of the globalization process, accept

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Jossey: Bass

<sup>26</sup> O'Sullivan, E. V., Morrel, A., & Connor, M. A. 2002, *Expanding the boundaries of transformative learning: on theory and praxis*. New York: Palgrave

pluralism as a consequence of globalization and attain in benign, ecumenical attitude towards other religions”<sup>27</sup>.

According to those views, Baha’i faith responses phenomenon of globalization as a situation in which all religious communities become balance of social life. In this context, globalization means a term describing how the contemporary nations and their citizens work for and become involved in a worldwide integration process in which money, goods, cultural items and human beings are moving more and more freely across borders. It is the process whereby the world becomes a ‘single space’<sup>28</sup>. The fundamental religious principles in Baha’i conform to a positive attitude towards relativism and globalization. The Baha’i adherents firmly believe that religious truth is not absolute but it is relative, that divine revelation is a continuous and progressive process, and that the great religions of the world represent successive stages in the spiritual evolution of human society. The firm doctrinal commitment to globalization is manifested in real-life attitudes and behavior among Baha’i adherents, both individually and as a group.

## **E. Conclusion**

The coming of Baha’i faith in Indonesia in 1920s has experienced political and social shift. As new religious movement it has some of the socio-political shifts, the first is the colonial period, the old order, new order, and reformation era, and from some of these shifts the Baha’is community is facing different situations. This study finds that in the colonial era Baha’i faith was more accepted by society than by new order era and reformation era. Problem of religious violence experienced by Baha’is community began in the new order era in which Suharto’s regime created five official religions and at that time Suharto has placed Islam as the largest religious commodity. This is why in 1970s there were cases of religious intimidation addressed to Baha’is leaders. One of the phenomena was the tragedy of exclusion to Baha’is founder in Banyuwangi-East Java in 1970s in which some of them were prisoned by military regime. Religious democracy in Indonesia is not as appropriate as like the five principles as we call Pancasila. The

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<sup>27</sup> Beyer, Peter, 1994, *Religion and globalization*, London, SAGE

<sup>28</sup> Robertson, 1991, “*Globalization, modernization, and postmodernization*”, *The ambiguous position of religion*, in Roland Robertson and William R. Garrett (eds) *Religion and global order*, Volume IV, New York: Paragon House

domination of majority groups in Indonesia enhances that religion is a political instrument to invite its followers. National laws created by government merely tend to support political tendency, not to support citizen. In this position, government creates official standard on religion in which this causes binary opposition between majority-minority, right-left and etc. Baha'i faith; which is not considered as official religion has become invisible religious community. Finally, this paper concludes that there are at least two general findings on this case related to the issue of social injustice as well as human rights in Baha'is community:

1. Social and political discrimination experienced by Baha'is community is that they may not have citizen identity card (KTP) if they do not confess one of the six official religions: Islam, Christianity, Buddhist, Hindu, Catholics, and Confucianism. There is violation of citizen rights such as access of education, health, and politics faced by Baha'is community. Social and political discrimination happens to Baha'is because officially government does not recognize their religious identity. This is why government has intention to distinguish between 'religion' and 'faith' because of political aim, particularly in Suharto's regime of which Indonesian society has to follow government rule to embrace one of the five official religions at that time. Due to such reason, religion becomes the most important instrument to win general election. Since Suharto's regime, Islam is the most powerful group, which becomes majority population of Indonesian society.
2. Abdurrahman Wahid as the first president after Suharto's fall in reformation era tried to promote Baha'is community as religious organization that needs to be protected by Indonesian law in order that Baha'is has the same rights like others. In addition, accomplishment of Abdurrahman Wahid in revoking laws of exclusion of minority groups conveys significant value for Baha'is. For survival strategy, Baha'is community prevents and maintains their social relationship and social neighborhood with other groups although they are politically and socially excluded. The Baha'i teachings encouraging religious diversity have influenced their social character to be more tolerant to other religious groups. Finally, although Baha'is community lives under government pressure, this group is

increasing rapidly not only in rural villages but also in big cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, Malang, Bali, Surabaya, etc.

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