

ISA REGIONAL GUEST LECTURE

# MAJORITY-MINORITY RELATIONS AND YOUNG MUSLIM ACTIVISTS

## THE CASE OF THE “HUMAN RIGHTS FRIENDLY REGION” OF WONOSOBO, CENTRAL JAVA, INDONESIA

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The so-called reform era after the fall of Suharto in 1998 was not only characterized by democratization and decentralization, but also by an increase of cases of religious intolerance. Conflicts emerged between adherents of different religions as well as between followers of different currents of the same religion. For example, in several provinces, Shia and Ahmadiyah communities were subject to discriminations and even violence. Similarly, other minorities or marginalized groups, such as members of spiritual movements (aliran kepercayaan) or former political prisoners and their families, experienced mistreatment. At the same time, some regions in Indonesia were (and still are) active in countering this trend towards intolerance. One such region is Wonosobo, located on the slopes of the Dieng Mountain in Central Java, Indonesia, which calls itself a “human rights friendly region”. Aiming to learn from the tensions and conflicts between majority and minority groups that occurred in the Suharto era in Wonosobo, young Muslim activists, many of them being members of Indonesia’s largest Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama, established fora where members of religious minorities and marginalized groups can meet with representatives of mainstream Islamic groups. They encourage mutual understanding and dialogue over issues that can potentially incite hostility. The paper examines the role of these young Muslim activists in constructing Wonosobo as a “human rights friendly region”. It asks how these activists organize majority-minority relations and how their activities affect the position and agency of the minority groups. Overall, the paper aims to contribute to our understanding of the organization of diversity in Indonesia by focusing on a case where the ideals of “harmony” and “tolerance” were translated into concrete action.



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