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## Revisiting Human Rights in Islamic Thought: Normative Principles and Their Implementation in Contemporary Contexts

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### Abstract

**Objective:** Human Rights is a fundamental issue in the global discourse that is closely related to respect for human dignity. In the Islamic tradition, the concept of human rights is not a new idea, but has been rooted theologically and philosophically in the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This research aims to analyze the concept of human rights in Islam, examine its epistemological differences with secular human rights paradigms, and evaluate its relevance and application in the context of contemporary society characterized by democracy, pluralism, and the demand for socio-economic justice. **Theoretical framework:** The theoretical framework of this research rests on the principles of monotheism, justice ('adl), and amanah as the foundation of Islamic human rights ethics, which is analyzed through the approach of maqāṣid al-syarī'ah as a contextual interpretive instrument. **Literature review:** A literature review shows that Islamic human rights studies have tended to be normative-textual or limited to comparison with Western human rights, thus emphasizing less emphasis on the applicative and transformational dimensions in modern life. **Methods:** This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach, by analyzing Islamic normative sources, contemporary Islamic thought, and modern human rights discourse critically and thematically. The data were analyzed descriptively and analytically to find conceptual patterns and the practical relevance of Islamic human rights. **Results:** The results of the study show that human rights in Islam are theocentric, placing Allah as the source of legitimacy of rights, while at the same time emphasizing the balance between human rights and obligations. **Implications:** The application of Islamic human rights in contemporary society requires the reinterpretation of religious texts based on maqāṣid al-syarī'ah to be in line with the values of justice, religious freedom, gender equality, socio-economic rights, and environmental protection. **Novelty:** this research lies in the affirmation of Islamic human rights as an adaptive and comprehensive ethical-religious framework, not just an alternative to Western human rights. The implications of this research are theoretical and practical, namely, strengthening Islam's position in the global human rights discourse and providing a normative foundation for the development of public policies, education, and social practices oriented towards contextually respecting human dignity.

**Keywords:** human rights, justice, maqāṣid al-syarī'ah, contemporary society, islamic thought.

## INTRODUCTION

Human Rights (HAM) is one of the most central issues in modern civilization because it is directly related to respect for dignity, freedom, and justice for every individual. In a global context, human rights are often positioned as a universal standard born from the Western historical experience, especially post-World War II. This paradigm then developed into the main reference in international law, democracy, and modern state governance. However, the dominance of secular-liberal human rights discourse has also raised criticism, especially from the perspective of religions, including Islam, which has its own ethical and legal traditions in guaranteeing basic human rights [1].

In Islam, the concept of human rights is not a product of Western modernity, but has been embedded theologically and normatively since the beginning of Islamic treatises. The Qur'an and Sunnah consistently affirm human dignity, equality, justice, religious freedom, protection of soul, property, and honor, as well as social responsibility. These principles show that Islam has an integral human rights framework, covering spiritual, moral, social, and legal dimensions. However, in academic practice and discourse, the concept of Islamic human rights is often perceived as problematic or incompatible with the demands of contemporary society, which is plural, democratic, and oriented towards individual rights [2].

The research gap arises when human rights studies in Islam are more limited to normative-theological levels or conceptual comparisons with Western human rights, without providing an adequate explanation of how Islamic human rights values can be operationally contextual in modern society. On the one hand, there is an overly apologetic study, which affirms the superiority of Islam without a critical dialogue with social reality. On the other hand, there is an approach that actually places Islamic human rights as a static concept and is not adaptive to the changing times. This gap shows the need for research that not only explains the normative basis of Islamic human rights but also examines the mechanisms of its reinterpretation and actualization in contemporary contexts [3].

In addition, there is still limited research that systematically makes *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* the main framework for bridging Islamic normative values with modern human rights demands. In fact, the *maqāṣid* approach allows for Islamic readings that are oriented towards the noble goals of the Shari'ah, such as the protection of religion, soul, intellect, descent, and property, which are in line with the principles of universal human rights. The absence of this approach in many studies of Islamic human rights has led to a dichotomy between fidelity to the text and the contextual needs of society [4].

Based on this gap, the importance of this research lies in the effort to present a more complete and balanced understanding of human rights in Islam. This research departs from the assumption that the conflict between Islam and human rights does not lie in its basic values, but in differences in paradigms, interpretation methodologies, and application contexts. In a global situation marked by increasing issues of intolerance, discrimination, socio-economic inequality, and environmental crises, Islam's contribution to human rights discourse is becoming increasingly relevant and urgent. Islam is not only needed as a religious identity, but also as a source of public ethics that is able to answer contemporary humanitarian problems [5].

This research is also important because it offers an alternative to the liberal absolutization of human rights that often ignores the dimensions of moral and social responsibility. In Islam, rights never stand alone, but always go hand in hand with obligations and trust. This perspective provides a balance between individual freedom and collective well-being, which is urgently needed in a modern society facing a crisis of individualism and social fragmentation [6].

In terms of novelty, this research offers several important novelties. First, this study affirms Islamic human rights as an autonomous ethical-religious system, not just a defensive response to Western human rights. Second, this study explicitly places *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* as

the main analytical instrument for interpreting and actualizing Islamic human rights in the context of contemporary society. Third, this research expands the scope of Islamic human rights not only on the issue of religious freedom and criminal law, but also on socio-economic rights, gender equality, distributive justice, and ecological rights as part of the mandate of the human caliphate. This approach makes Islamic human rights more comprehensive, applicable, and relevant to the challenges of the times [7].

The implications of this research are multidimensional. Theoretically, this research enriches the treasures of contemporary Islamic thought by offering a contextual, dynamic, and goal-oriented paradigm of Islamic human rights. Practically, the findings of this study can be a reference in the formulation of public policies based on the values of justice, equality, and respect for human dignity, especially in countries with a Muslim majority. In the field of education, this research has implications for the development of an Islamic education curriculum that is more humane, moderate, and responsive to human rights issues. Meanwhile, in the social sphere, this research can strengthen dialogue between religion and human rights, as well as encourage more inclusive and common benefit-oriented religious practices [8], [9].

Thus, this research not only fills an academic gap in Islamic human rights studies but also contributes tangibly to building a civilization that upholds human dignity through a contextual and transformative ethical-religious approach.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of human rights has developed widely in various disciplines, including law, philosophy, politics, and religious studies. In modern literature, human rights are generally understood as a set of universal rights inherent in each individual based on human dignity. This approach places human beings as the primary subjects of rights, with the state obliged to protect and guarantee their fulfillment. In its development, the concept of human rights is often associated with democracy, individual freedom, equality, and social justice [10], [11].

In the Islamic perspective, the literature shows that the concept of human rights has strong theological roots. Human beings are understood as glorified creatures and entrusted to maintain a just life together. Classical and contemporary Islamic studies affirm that the rights to life, liberty, honor, and property have been recognized in Islamic teachings since the beginning. These rights are not seen as a mere gift of the state or social consensus, but as inherent rights because of the position of human beings as God's creation [12], [13].

The comparative literature between Islamic and Western human rights highlights the differences in the sources of legitimacy and the limitations of the use of rights. Western human rights are generally anthropocentric and emphasize individual autonomy, while Islamic human rights are theocentric and place freedom within the framework of moral and social responsibility. These differences often give rise to conceptual tensions, especially in the issues of religious freedom, gender equality, and criminal law. However, several studies also show substantial common ground, such as rejection of discrimination, oppression, and violence, as well as a commitment to justice and human dignity [14], [15].

In the context of contemporary society, Islamic human rights literature highlights the challenge of actualizing normative values in a plural and dynamic social reality. Globalization, the development of democracy, and increasing awareness of individual rights demand a more contextual interpretive approach. Recent studies have emphasized the importance of reinterpreting Islamic teachings in order to remain relevant without losing their basic principles. This approach aims to bridge the gap between normative texts and the needs of modern society [16], [17].

A number of literature has also developed the idea that Islamic human rights are not only concerned with civil and political rights, but also include social, economic, and

environmental rights. Distributive justice, protection of vulnerable groups, and responsibility for nature conservation are seen as integral parts of the Islamic concept of human rights. Thus, Islamic human rights have a broad scope and are holistic [18], [19].

Overall, the literature review shows that human rights in Islam are a rich and complex concept. The main challenge lies not in the absence of human rights values in Islam, but in how these values are interpreted and applied contextually in a contemporary society that continues to undergo social, political, and cultural changes [20].

## METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with the aim of understanding in depth the concept of Human Rights (HAM) from the perspective of Islam and its relevance and application in the context of contemporary society. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meaning, value, and construction of thought contained in religious texts and academic discourse, without being limited by statistical measurements [21].

This type of research is library research, which focuses on searching, collecting, and analyzing written sources related to human rights in Islam. The primary data in this study are in the form of Islamic normative texts, especially the Qur'an and Sunnah, which contain basic principles of human dignity, justice, freedom, and moral responsibility. Meanwhile, secondary data include works of classical and contemporary Islamic thought, academic writings on human rights, as well as discourses related to democracy, pluralism, and social justice [22].

The data collection technique is carried out through documentation studies, namely by identifying, classifying, and selecting literature materials that are relevant to the focus of the research. This process is carried out systematically to ensure that the data used reflects the diversity of perspectives and developments of human rights-related thinking in Islam. The data collected is then compiled based on key themes, such as the theological foundation of Islamic human rights, comparisons with secular human rights paradigms, and challenges and opportunities for its application in modern society [23].

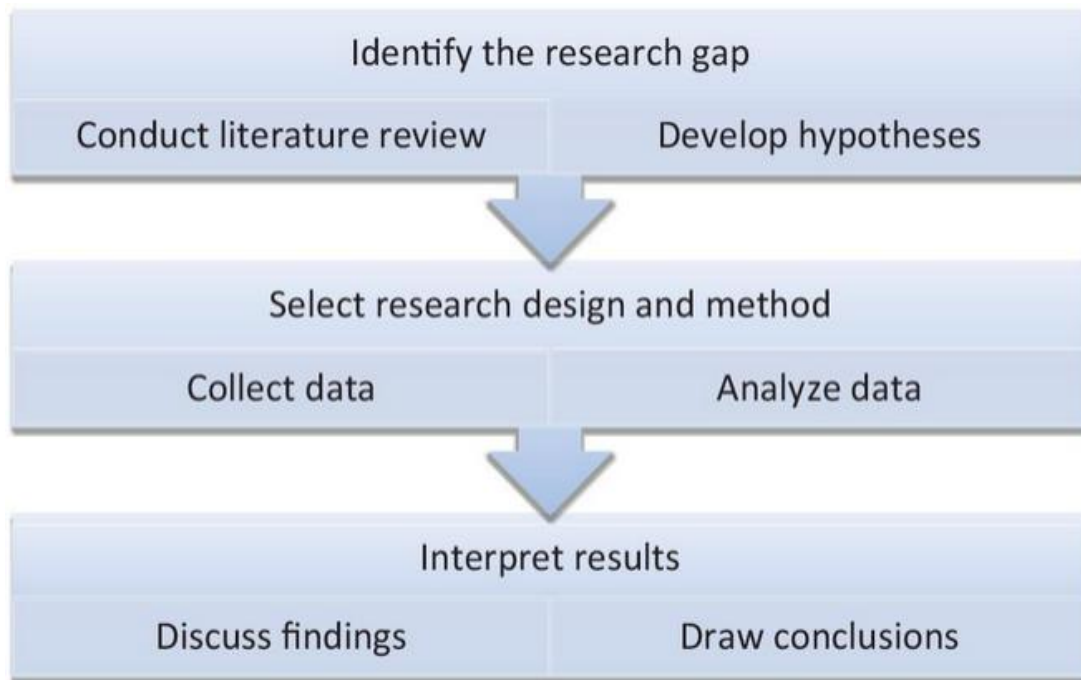


Figure 1. Research Methodology Framework

Data analysis was carried out using descriptive-analytical and interpretive methods. The descriptive method is used to explain the concepts of human rights in Islam systematically and comprehensively, while the analytical method is used to examine the relationships between concepts, paradigm differences, and their relevance to the contemporary context. An interpretive approach is applied to interpret religious texts contextually, taking into account social, cultural, and political changes [24].

To strengthen the validity of the analysis, this study uses an approach *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* as the main interpretive framework. This approach allows researchers to understand the fundamental goals of Islamic sharia in protecting and advancing human welfare, so that the concept of Islamic human rights is not understood textually alone, but also substantively and contextually. In addition, conceptual triangulation is carried out by comparing various views of Islamic thinkers and modern human rights discourses to obtain a more complete understanding [25].

Through this methodology, the research is expected to be able to produce a comprehensive understanding of human rights in Islam, while offering a conceptual framework that is relevant and applicable to the development of human rights thought and practice in contemporary society [26].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Concept of Human Rights in Islam

#### Normative and Theological Foundations

Islam lays the foundation of human rights on the principle of monotheism, which is the recognition of the oneness of Allah and the equality of all human beings before Him. Because humans are creatures created by Allah, each individual has inalienable rights that cannot be erased by anyone. This principle is reflected in the word of Allah: Verily, We have glorified the descendants of Adam, and We have carried them on land and in the sea. We have also bestowed upon them sustenance from the good, and We have made them superior to many creatures whom We have created with perfect advantages." (QS. Al-Isra': 70).

In addition to monotheism, the principles of "adl (justice) and amanah (responsibility) are important foundations. Allah commands that justice be upheld without discrimination (QS. An-Nisa" 135)

O you who have believed, be the enforcer of justice and a witness for Allah's sake, even if the testimony is incriminating to yourself, your parents, or your relatives. If he is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of knowing both. Therefore, do not follow your desires because you want to deviate (from the truth). If you distort (words) or turn away (refuse to be witnesses), verily Allah is Thorough in all that you do. Justice in Islam does not only mean formal law, but also social and economic justice that guarantees the well-being of the ummah.

#### Types and Dimensions of Human Rights in Islam

Islam recognizes various basic rights inherent in every individual, including:

a. The right to life (ḥaqq al-ḥayāh)

Islam affirms that human life is sacred. QS. Al-Ma'idah: 32 states that killing one soul without a valid reason is the same as killing the whole of humanity. Therefore, we have established for the Children of Israel that whoever kills someone does not kill another person or because he has done harm to the earth, but as if he had killed all mankind [27].

b. The right to freedom (ḥaqq al-ḥurriyyah)

Islam recognizes freedom of thought, opinion, and religion. QS. Al-Baqarah: 256 affirms: "There is no compulsion in (embracing) religion." There is no compulsion in religion (Islam) [28], [29].

c. The right to honor and dignity (ḥaqq al-karāmah)

Every human being is entitled to the protection of his own honor. Islam prohibits slander, ghibah, and insults (QS. Al-Hujurat: 11–12). O you who have believed, let not one people make fun of another race, and let not women (mock) be better than them. Do not reproach one another and call one another bad nicknames. The worst of the call is the wicked after believing. Those who do not repent, they are the wrongdoers. O you who have believed, stay away from many prejudices! Actually, some prejudices are sins. Do not look for the faults of others, and do not gossip about others. Is there any of you who likes to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Of course, you feel disgusted. Fear Allah! Indeed, Allah is the Acceptor of Repentance and the Most Merciful [30]–[32].

d. The right to property and welfare (ḥaqq al-milk wa al-kifāyah)

Islam provides the right of personal property with moral limits, as well as guaranteeing social welfare through zakat and almsgiving.

e. The right to justice (ḥaqq al-"adālah)

Justice is the basic principle of all Islamic law. This justice must be upheld against anyone, including oneself [33], [34].

### **Comparison of Islamic and Western Human Rights Concepts**

In the modern Western tradition, human rights are based on the philosophy of humanism and rationalism that place humans at the center of all values (anthropocentric). Rights are considered to come from human nature, not from God. Meanwhile, in Islam, human rights are theocentric, that is, they come from the divine will.

This difference has implications for the limitation of the use of rights. In Islam, individual freedom must be in line with sharia and social welfare. Islam rejects the absolutization of freedom that ignores moral responsibility [35], [36].

However, there is a common ground between the two:

1. Both affirm respect for life, justice, and equality.
2. Both reject slavery, oppression, and discrimination.
3. Islam, through the Charter of Medina (622 AD), had even practiced human rights principles such as freedom of religion, protection of minorities, and social justice long before the emergence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) [37]–[39].

### **The Application of the Concept of Islamic Human Rights in Contemporary Society**

1. Application of the Values of Justice and Equality

In modern society, the principles of Islamic justice and equality can be realized through a non-discriminatory legal system and social policies that ensure educational and economic access for all groups. The state plays a role as a protector of the rights of the people according to the principle of *maslahah 'ammah* (public interest).

2. Religious Freedom and Women's Rights

Islam affirms freedom of religion without coercion, but still maintains public order and morality. On gender issues, Islam guarantees spiritual equality and women's rights to education, work, and social participation (QS. At-Taubah: 71).

Believers, men and women, some of them are helpers to others. They enjoin (do) makruf and prevent (doing) disobedience, enforce prayer, pay zakat, and obey Allah and His Messenger. They will be blessed by Allah. Indeed, Allah is Mighty and Wise [40], [41].

### 3. Economic Rights and Social Welfare

Zakat, infaq, and waqf are economic human rights instruments in Islam that uphold distributive justice. In the contemporary context, this can be developed through an Islamic economic system based on social justice and humanitarian solidarity.

### 4. Protection of the Environment and Future Generations

The right to a clean environment is part of the mandate of the human caliphate. QS. Al-A'raf: 56 affirms the prohibition of doing earth damage.

And do not do any harm to the earth after it has been created. Pray to Him with fear so that you will be more solemn and motivated to obey Him, and full of hope for His grace and the fulfillment of your prayers. Indeed, Allah's mercy is very close to those who do good. Thus, the concept of Islamic human rights includes ecological rights that protect current and future generations [42].

### 5. Implementation Challenges and Strategies

The main challenges of the implementation of Islamic human rights include:

- a. Conservative interpretation of religious texts.
- b. Politicization of religion and ideological conflicts.
- c. The dominance of global secular discourse.

The solution is the maqāṣid al-syarī'ah approach, which interprets Islamic law based on its main objectives: safeguarding religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), soul (ḥifẓ al-nafs), intellect (ḥifẓ al-"aql), heredity (ḥifẓ al-nasl), and wealth (ḥifẓ al-māl). This approach allows Islam to adapt to the needs of modern society without losing its basic principles [43].

## Analysis Results

The results of the analysis show that the concept of Human Rights in Islam has a strong theological foundation and a comprehensive value system. Islam views human beings as creatures who are glorified and entrusted by Allah, so that basic human rights are inherent from birth and do not depend on state recognition or social consensus. This principle affirms that human dignity is universal and inalienable, and at the same time is the main foundation for the concept of human rights in Islam.

An analysis of Islamic normative sources shows that human rights in Islam are based on three main principles, namely monotheism, justice ('adl), and moral responsibility (amanah). The principle of monotheism places Allah as the source of legitimacy of rights, so that human rights are always within the framework of submission to divine values. The principle of justice demands equal treatment of all human beings without discrimination based on race, sex, or social status. Meanwhile, the principle of trust emphasizes that every individual not only has rights, but also an obligation to protect the rights of others and the common good [44], [45].

In comparison with the secular human rights paradigm, the analysis shows a fundamental difference in the source and orientation of values. Secular human rights tend to be anthropocentric and emphasize individual freedom as the primary goal, while Islamic human rights are theocentric and place freedom within the framework of ethics and social responsibility. Nevertheless, there is a substantive common ground between the two, especially in the affirmation of the protection of life, fundamental freedoms, equality before

the law, and the rejection of oppression and violence. This shows that paradigm differences do not always lead to value conflicts.

**Table 1. Summary of Human Rights Concepts in Islam and Their Contemporary Relevance**

Aspect	Islamic Principle	Contemporary Relevance
Theological Foundation	Tawhid, justice ('adl), and trust (amanah)	Basis for human dignity and equality
Right to Life	Protection of human life (ḥaqq al-ḥayāh)	Human security and protection from violence
Freedom	Freedom of religion and thought (ḥaqq al-ḥurriyyah)	Religious tolerance and civil liberties
Human Dignity	Protection of honor (ḥaqq al-karāmah)	Anti-discrimination and respect for diversity
Economic Rights	Property and welfare rights	Social justice through zakat and welfare systems
Environmental Rights	Human stewardship (khilāfah)	Environmental sustainability and intergenerational responsibility
Implementation Strategy	Maqāṣid al-syarī'ah approach	Harmonizing Islamic values with modern human rights discourse

The analysis also reveals that the main challenge to human rights in Islam lies not in the absence of value, but in the problem of interpretation and implementation. A textual and rigid understanding of religious teachings often hinders the actualization of human rights values in the context of a plural and dynamic contemporary society. In this case, *the maqāṣid al-syarī'ah approach* proved relevant as an analytical instrument that allowed the reinterpretation of Islamic teachings based on the goals of benefit. Through this approach, Islamic human rights values can be harmonized with the principles of democracy, pluralism, and social justice without losing their Islamic identity.

Furthermore, the results of the analysis show that the scope of human rights in Islam is not limited to civil and political rights, but also includes social, economic, and environmental rights. Islam emphasizes the importance of distributive justice, protection of vulnerable groups, and human responsibility for the preservation of nature as part of the caliphate's mandate. This perspective expands the understanding of human rights to be more holistic and oriented towards a balance between individual rights and collective interests.

In the context of contemporary society, the application of Islamic human rights requires a constructive dialogue between religious values and social reality. The results of the analysis show that contextual and inclusive approaches are more effective in bridging the tension between religious norms and the demands of modernity. Thus, human rights in Islam are not positioned as a static concept or contrary to the development of the times, but as a dynamic ethical framework that can make a significant contribution to building a just, humanist, and civilized society [46], [47].

The findings further indicate that Islamic human rights should not be understood merely as a legal doctrine, but as a comprehensive ethical framework that integrates spiritual values, social responsibility, and human welfare. Unlike approaches that focus exclusively on individual autonomy, the Islamic perspective emphasizes a balance between rights and obligations. This balance is essential for maintaining social harmony and preventing the misuse of freedom in ways that may undermine collective well-being. Consequently, the Islamic conception of human rights provides a moral foundation that links personal liberty with accountability before God and society.

Another important finding is that the maqāsid al-syarī'ah framework offers a productive methodological bridge between Islamic normative teachings and contemporary human rights discourse. By focusing on the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property, maqāsid-oriented interpretation enables Islamic teachings to respond effectively to changing social realities while preserving their foundational values. This approach demonstrates that Islamic law possesses an inherent capacity for adaptability and contextualization, making it relevant to modern issues such as democratic participation, gender justice, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability [46], [47].

The analysis also highlights the importance of moving beyond binary oppositions that portray Islamic and secular human rights paradigms as inherently incompatible. Although differences exist regarding the source of legitimacy and the scope of individual freedom, both traditions share significant commitments to human dignity, justice, equality, and protection from oppression. Therefore, constructive engagement between these paradigms can contribute to the development of more inclusive and culturally grounded human rights frameworks that are capable of addressing the complexities of contemporary societies.

Moreover, the expansion of Islamic human rights discourse toward socio-economic and ecological dimensions reflects the holistic nature of Islamic ethics. Issues such as poverty alleviation, equitable distribution of resources, environmental protection, and intergenerational justice are not peripheral concerns but integral components of human dignity and welfare. This broader perspective strengthens the relevance of Islamic human rights in responding to global challenges, including inequality, social exclusion, and environmental degradation. Therefore, the study confirms that Islamic human rights constitute a dynamic, transformative, and context-sensitive framework capable of contributing meaningfully to contemporary debates on justice, freedom, and human flourishing while maintaining fidelity to the ethical principles of Islam.

## CONCLUSION

Human rights in Islam are integral, holistic, and deeply rooted in Islamic theological teachings, especially the principles of monotheism, justice ('adl), and trust. Islam views human beings as creatures who are glorified by Allah and are given basic rights inherent from birth, such as the right to life, freedom, honor, and well-being. These rights are not understood as the result of a social contract or political consensus alone, but as a divine mandate that must be maintained and respected by individuals, society, and the state. Thus, the concept of human rights in Islam places human dignity as a fundamental non-negotiable value. The fundamental difference between the concept of Islamic human rights and the Western paradigm of human rights lies in the source of its legitimacy and moral orientation. Western human rights tend to be anthropocentric with an emphasis on individual freedom as the main value, while Islamic human rights are theocentric and place freedom within the framework of moral responsibility and devotion to Allah. In Islam, rights always go hand in hand with obligations, so the fulfillment of individual rights must not ignore social benefits and the value of justice. Despite the paradigm differences, this study shows that there is a substantial common ground between Islamic and modern human rights, especially in the commitment to justice, equality, and the protection of vulnerable groups. In the context of contemporary society, the implementation of Islamic human rights faces complex challenges due to the dynamics of globalization, pluralism, and social change. Nevertheless, the maqāsid al-syarī'ah approach offers a relevant interpretive framework for bridging Islamic normative values with the demands of the times. Through this approach, Islamic human rights principles can be realized contextually in the form of social justice enforcement, economic empowerment, inequality reduction, environmental protection, and the strengthening of universal human values. Overall,

this study confirms that Islam has great potential to make a constructive contribution to the global human rights discourse. Human rights in Islam not only function as a system of religious norms but also as a dynamic and transformative ethical framework for the development of modern civilization. By integrating spiritual, moral, and social values, the concept of Islamic human rights can be the foundation for the creation of a just, civilized society and uphold human dignity on a local and global scale.

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### Author's Contributions

All authors contributed substantially to this study. Edy Juarminson conceived the research idea and drafted the manuscript. Zawil Huda contributed to the theoretical framework and literature analysis. Rusydi. AM participated in data interpretation and critical revision. Sri Wahyuni contributed to manuscript editing, validation, and final approval. All authors approved the published version.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no financial, professional, institutional, or personal conflicts of interest related to this research. The study was conducted independently and objectively without influence from any external organization, sponsor, or funding body. All interpretations, analyses, and conclusions presented in this article reflect the authors' academic judgment and scholarly responsibility.

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