

## Reflection NICMCR Yogyakarta 29/08/2023

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I am incredibly grateful to have been invited by the Netherlands Indonesia Consortium for Muslim-Christian Relations to attend two conferences on interreligious dialogue. Through this opportunity, I had the privilege to meet members from organisations, such as the Dutch Embassy, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, Kerk in Actie, and many more. Additionally, I had the opportunity to speak at one of the conferences on my own research, which further provided me with a new learning experience.

The Consortium's effort to engage people from all layers of Indonesian society became apparent in two ways. One, Muslims and Christians were brought together in an academic setting. The theme-based conferences were inclusive for all people from different religious walks of life. However, hosting the conferences at Islamic *and* Christian universities also encouraged us and these people to be physically in each other's presence. Thus, the encounter was two-fold: academically and physically. Secondly, not only did the organization's choice for these two spaces bring people together, the whole interreligious identity of NICMCR transpired in the activities we did beyond the conferences. The ordinary things of life – eating, celebrating, dancing – bring these layers of Indonesia's society together in the most organic way, regardless of one's religion.

I found this to be different from the Netherlands. The way that we draw so much attention to someone's religion in the Netherlands, as if it is something to be discussed, as if it is everyone's business. The way that we sometimes feel like we need to go out of our ways to accommodate someone's beliefs. It does not exist in Indonesia. In that place, it is a given that you take into account the restrictions and the freedoms of your Indonesian brother or sister's religion. It is so much in the Indonesian consciousness, that it is rather in the *subconsciousness*. The latter is something I want to take with me in my own academic work. Perhaps, we are trying hard to find common ground, but that is only possible if we focus on the differences. The question then arises: why should we?

This programme was far richer than I anticipated and something that I would encourage everyone to engage in. The insights can be life-changing, as they can offer new perspectives on how we should live together. This is especially a question that exists in the Netherlands and will continue to develop into a far greater question due to migration and globalization. However, Indonesia's long history with interreligious dialogue can teach the Netherlands great things on how to go about these issues. Thus, an organization such as NICMCR, whose core mission it is to exchange between Muslims and Christians take place through methods of research, dialogue and partnership, is incredibly essential to society.

Young people, especially students like me, can really benefit from participating in NICMCR's activities, like in their pokjas. Meeting other people in academic, that are truly passionate about changing the world of interreligious relations, can be a valuable and rich experience to those who wish to do the same.