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# INTERWEAVING HUMANISM AND ISLAMIC THEOLOGY: A COMPREHENSIVE INQUIRY INTO AMAR MA'RUF NAHI MUNKAR

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**Abstract:** Religious violence, causing societal friction, especially in diverse Indonesian communities, is often linked to the enforcement of Amar Makruf Nahi Munkar, a principle in Islamic theology. This article aims to trace the root cause of this issue by analyzing the humanist elements in Islamic theology, particularly within Amar Makruf Nahi Munkar. Religious violence, causing societal friction, especially in diverse Indonesian communities, is often linked to the enforcement of Amar Makruf Nahi Munkar, a principle in Islamic theology. Using descriptive and hermeneutic methodologies, the study explores various interpretations of this concept among Islamic scholars, including Qâdi ‘Abd al-Jabbâr, al-Ghazali, and al-Zamakhsarî. The in-depth review reveals that Amar Makruf Nahi Munkar encompasses key humanist values that can be applied in real-life situations, advocating for a gradual approach to promoting goodness based on the individual’s competence and appropriate methods, distancing it from violent and rigid impressions.

**Keywords:** amar makruf nahi munkar; humanist value; Islamic Theology

## Introduction

The rise of the phenomenon of violence perpetrated by individuals or groups of people in the name of religion has become a problem, causing quarrels and friction in the community. Therefore, the effort to trace the root cause of violence in the name of religion, especially in Turâth Islamy as a response to the above phenomenon, is significant because:

First, In the context of a pluralistic Indonesian society, the diversity of society, both in terms of religion and culture, is unique and has extraordinary potential. However, this diversity has the potential for conflict. As we know, a society with diverse composition generates various interests. Proper management is crucial to prevent conflicts of interest. According to Levin's conflict paradigm, a dispute can occur on the assumption that every person in society continuously competes or competes to get something of value or value to himself, such as power, position, belief (religion), or work. (Levin, 1988, p. 31) Problems like this need to get a solution immediately so they do not get too late and cause disintegration.

Second, A closer look at conflicts today shows that many are happening in the name of religion. The militancy or persistence of some members of the community in maintaining their religious identity and ideology has resulted in many frictions that lead to a conflict with violence, both physical and verbal. The sharp potential for social conflict is also supported by militancy and fanaticism against a particular religious ideology. Another factor that causes conflict is the attempt to dominate a group and the response back, namely in the form of an attempt to reject and fight the group's domination over themselves or their group. (Babbie, 1988, p. 44)

Third, Muslims have recently been stigmatized as an anarchistic group, often committing acts of violence and persecution under the pretext of upholding religious values. Muslims became suspects of violence after the Bali bombing catastrophe in late 2002 because the perpetrators were Muslims. Whereas in the New Order era, there were groups within Islam that received repressive actions from the government (Al-Mukmin Ngruki Islamic Boarding School - Solo) on charges of subversion for calling for "GOLPUT" (abstaining from voting in an election) in elections and rejecting the single principle of Pancasila. (Najib, 2013)

Sweeping actions carried out by other Islamic groups also strengthened public perception. This sweeping action stigmatizes Islam as a religion that is familiar with anarchism because Muslims prefer to take action with a physical approach rather than persuasion. This action has led to conflict and resistance, leading to acts of violence. Violence from Islamic groups also arises from those who demand the formal implementation of Islamic law in the Indonesian Constitution. To realize this idealism, this group does not hesitate to carry out acts of violence that even lead to terror, such as attacks and destruction of places of worship. (Anwar, 2014, p. 221)

To unravel the roots of violence in the name of religion, especially Islam, an in-depth review of the Islamic Turâth, which holds the treasures of the scientific tradition of Muslim scholars—especially concerning 'Aqidah (theology)- is needed. The theological domain in Islamic Turâth is the domain of *'Ilm Kalam*, or speculative theology. According to Ibn Khaldun, Kalam is an attempt to observe events that are not empirical. (Peters, 1976, p. 4)

This search in Islamic Turâth using the *'Ilm Kalam* provides information that in Islam, there is an ideology that becomes an operational tool for the earthing of Islamic teachings. Without this concept, Islamic teachings will not be practical and will only be theoretical without being applied. The concept is Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar. Muslims showed various responses when faced with this concept, especially in the realm of practical application. That is when a Muslim tries to realize what is still in his ideological concept in the praxis-empirical realm.

This concept is often associated with using violence to enforce Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar. Another problem faced is the issue of authority (Authorization Problem). With their own passionate and militant nature, every social community member feels that he is the most entitled to implement this doctrine. Up to this stage, friction (friction) between individuals and groups cannot be avoided. Even this friction is not uncommon in acts of anarchism and terror.

So, the understanding and practice of upholding the concept of Amar Makruf Nahi Munkar by Muslim intellectuals in the Islamic Turâth tradition – understanding all sects in Islam – becomes very important to highlight the human values behind this teaching.

This work is critical so that the concept of Amar Makruf Nahi Munkar is no longer the basis for some groups in Islam to carry out

acts of violence by supporting religious orders. At the same time, an understanding that does not follow the text of Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar and the intent of the text itself results in a humane understanding and practice of religion.

## Results and Discussion

To reveal the meaning of the Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar, steps are needed to understand the horizon of thought of representative figures in the heritage of Islamic heritage (*turâth Islamy*). To understand one's horizons can be done through a medium, namely text.<sup>1</sup> In essence, text is some expression that can generally be used to refer to, although its function is not only for that. With text, one can reveal the individual situation of the text's author because the expressions express his experience. (Thompson, 2005, pp. 49, 119)

Furthermore, efforts to uncover the situation behind the text can be made by understanding the situation surrounding the author. For this reason, psychological or technical interpretation can be applied. Namely, the understanding of individual authors objectified through language. (Afandi, 2007; Bleicher, 2007) Through this process, the meaning of the Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar can be revealed and applied.

There are thirty-eight words of *al-Ma'ruf* and sixteen of *al-Munkar* in the Qur'an. *Al-Ma'ruf*—according to *Mufradat ar-Raghib* and others—is the name of every deed considered good according to reason or religion (*shara'*). While *al-Munkar* means that every action that by common sense is seen as ugly, or reason does not look bad or good, religion (*Shari'ah*) views it as ugly.

Some argue that *al-Ma'ruf* is a name that encompasses every deed known as obedience and self-approach to Allah and doing good (*Ihsan*) to humans. While *al-Munkar* means the opposite, some also argue that *al-Ma'ruf* is a name that includes every act beloved by Allah in the form of faith and pious deeds. (Taymiah, n.d.)

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<sup>1</sup> The text was written by someone who lived during the time it describes. This makes it a useful tool for understanding the past. However, it's important to put effort into comprehending the text and building a complete understanding of the historical context.

Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar etymologically consists of four words: Amar, Ma'ruf, Nahi, and Munkar. The word *amr* is a derivation of the root word *amara*, which means command or demand, which is an effort to burden someone to do something, or it can be said to be a demand to do something. The word *amr* is the antithesis of the word *al-nafy*. (Al-Jurjâny, 1988, p. 37; al-Zâwy, 1996, p. 176) The word *al-ma'rûf* comes from the root word *'arafa* which means to know (al-Zâwy, 1996, p. 198) or to recognize. (Ibrâhîm Anîs et al., 1960, p. 595) Linguistically, it means "the known" or "the recognized." In terms, it means everything known to be good and always good. The opposite of the word *al-ma'rûf* is *al-nakr* or *al-Munkar*. (Abû al-Fadl Jamâl al-Dîn Muhammad bin Mukrim bin Manzûr al-Ifriqî al-Misry, 1990, p. 239)

The word *al-nahy* is a derivation of *nahâ*, which means prohibition or prevention, namely the demand to avoid something. (Ibrâhîm Anîs et al., 1960, p. 960) Or leave what is forbidden. (Al-Jurjâny, 1988, p. 248; al-Zâwy, 1996, p. 455) The word *al-Munkar* comes from the verb *nakara* (not to know) or *Ankara* (not to recognize, to deny), which means something unknown or a matter that is not recognized, denied (vile). (Ibrâhîm Anîs et al., 1960, vol. 2: 951) Terminologically, it means anything judged by common sense and *shar'î* to be bad and forbidden. (Ibrâhîm Anîs et al., 1960, vol. 2: 951)

Based on the above definitive analysis, it can be said that Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar is terminological: "a command to observe everything that is known to be good and the prohibition or prevention of everything that is judged bad both logically and scary." (Muhibbin, 2012, p. 69) On this subject, al-Jurjânî, in his book *Kitâb al-Ta'rîfât* sets forth several definitions of Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar, among them is guidance to the straight path, which saves, and prevents what is not proper according to the *shara'*, guidance to good and preventing from evil, the command to things that are following the Qur'an and Sunnah, and prevent from everything that comes from lust and *shahwat*. Furthermore, the last is a gesture (hint) to the deeds and words of the servant whom Allah recognizes and denounces something that the *shar'ah* and good soul avoid, that is, something forbidden in the religion of Allah". (Al-Jurjâny, 1988, pp. 36–37).

Some of the definitions developed by al-Jurjânî above are essentially the same. The difference lies only on the editorial side. Al-Ma'rûf is understood as goodness, the straight path that saves, things that conform to the Qur'an and Sunnah, and the deeds or words of

servants whom Allah recognizes, are all one meaning, that is, everything that is known to be good, both reasonably and shar'î. Whereas *al-Munkar* is understood as evil, what is not proper according to the shara', everything that comes from lust and shahwat, and something that the shar'îah and good souls avoid, that is, something forbidden in the religion of Allah. Everything also has one meaning: everything that is judged poorly, both reasonably and Shar'y.

The explanation above shows that the concept of *al-Ma'ruf* can be interpreted as something that is known to be good or has the characteristics of goodness. In Arab societies, as a community of speakers (the original public), the word *al-Ma'ruf* is understood as the opposite of *al-Munkar*, so an understanding of *al-Ma'ruf* as a good and praiseworthy act can be obtained.

Regarding matters that can be categorized as hypocrisy, Qâdi 'Abd al-Jabbâr divided them into two kinds: hypocrisy according to reason and hypocrisy according to shar'îah. He explains *Al-Munkar* (evil) included in *al-'aqliyat* are acts of oppression, lying, sedition, envy, jealousy, disobedience, wickedness, hypocrisy, and *kufr*. The implementation of *nahi munkar* against this first category is mandatory without exception. Meanwhile, the evil that falls into the category of *al-shar'iyat* is further divided into two categories: the first is a matter that does not allow *ijtihad* in it, and the second is a matter that can accept *ijtihad*. As for *al-Munkar*, cases that cannot accept *ijtihad* are stealing, adultery, drinking alcohol, and the like, which are things that are *Qat'î*, prohibited by religion.

The example for *al-Munkar* in cases amenable to *ijtihad* is doing an act whose *shar'îah* ruling is still debated among scholars because there is no *Qat'î* evidence in the Qur'an and al-Sunnah. (Qađi 'Abd Al-Jabbâr, 2009, p. 147)

### **The Law of Enforcing Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar**

Various kinds of literature show that the Jumhur al-Ulamâ' have reached *ijma'* (agreement) that the ruling of Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar is Fardhu kifayah. Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbâr agrees with the Jumhur al-Ulam' above, and then he adds that there is an exception for a small part of the Imâmiyyah who do not agree with the *ijma'*. However, the existence of this small group does not reduce the legitimacy of the *ijma'* of the jumhûr al-ulamâ' because their number is small, so it is not so calculated.

The focus of Qâdi 'Abd al-Jabbâr's attention does not lie on the *farḍu kifâyah* law of Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar, which has become the *ijma'* of the scholars. In his book *Sharh al-ushûl al-Khaimah* Qâdi, 'Abd al-Jabbâr explains that the difference in scholarly opinion does not lie in the obligation or not, Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar, but lies in the foundation of the obligation, whether it is obligatory based on share,' or obligatory based on reason.)Qaḍi 'Abd Al-Jabbâr, 2009, p. 742(

As for *ijma'*, scholars have agreed on this matter. Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbâr explains the law of commanding Ma'ruf nahi munkar from case to case. The quote above confirms that Qâdi 'Abd al-Jabbâr divides the law of Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar with the categorization of doing *al-Munkar*. The evil is divided into two categories: personal and communal. Personal evil is further divided into two categories: the evil that brings down the value, position, and psychology of a person, and the evil that does not bring down the position and psychology of a person.

The evil that brings down a person's position and psychology is exemplified by a person who lives in poverty and distress, has nothing but one dinar, and then that one dinar is taken away from him. So, *nabi munkar*, in this case, is obligatory '*aqly* and *shar'î*.

An evil that does not bring down position and honor is exemplified by a wealthy man who has a small portion of his wealth confiscated and is practically unaffected by the incident, both psychologically and in terms of his wealth. Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar, in this case, does not become obligatory according to '*Aqly*, but it is still obligatory according to the *Shar'î* law.(Qaḍi 'Abd Al-Jabbâr, 2009, p. 144)

Qâdi 'Abd al-Jabbâr then divided Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar into two other parts. First: *al-Munkar* (evil), which requires compulsion to change it, namely the evil whose adverse effects and dangers return to themselves, for example, eating carrion, drinking alcohol, saying sentences that lead to *kufr*, and the like. These must be removed by force to safeguard one's safety. Second: *al-Munkar* (evil), which does not require coercion to change it because if it uses coercion, then it can have fatal consequences, such as resulting in the killing of fellow Muslims.(Qaḍi 'Abd Al-Jabbâr, 2009, p. 145)

In addition to dividing *al-Munkar* into several types and characteristics, Qâdi 'Abd al-Jabbâr also divides *al-Ma'ruf* into two types and characteristics, and their provisions follow the object ordered. If the commanded object is obligatory, then the command to it is obligatory, and if the commanded object is sunnah, then the command to it is Sunnah. Previously, the *salaf* scholars made Amar Ma'ruf an absolute matter, without exception. However, the opinion of the *salaf* scholars was countered by Qâdi 'Abd al-Jabbâr with this division because it is impossible to obligate a matter while the matter is Sunnah in Shari'ah. (Qâdi 'Abd Al-Jabbâr, 2009, p. 146)

### **Enforcing *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar***

Qâdi 'Abd al-Jabbâr emphasized that doing Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar should not be done haphazardly; several terms and conditions must be met. If these conditions are met, Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar becomes mandatory, and vice versa. This is determined to minimize or even prevent mistakes in action and regret later.

First, *al-Ma'ruf* (goodness) to be achieved and the evil to be dealt with must be apparent; it must be clear that *al-Ma'ruf* is a good thing, and vice versa, *al-Munkar* must be a bad or bad thing. In other words, before action is taken against an evil, *tabayyun* (seeking clarity) or *tathbît* (seeking certainty) must first be carried out, as affirmed in QS. al-Ḥujurât [49]: 6. Taking action based only on assumptions is not allowed. This explains that *tabayyun* and *tathbît* are two words that are close in meaning, namely, looking for concrete evidence. (Abu al-Qasim Jarullah Mahmud bin Umar Al-Zamakhsharî, 2015, vol. 5: 565)

Second, the clarity of *al-Ma'ruf* and *al-Munkar* must be supported by empirical evidence that evil is happening. This can be known from the availability of equipment commonly used for evil, for example, gambling equipment, liquor, drugs, and the like, so that there is confidence that evil is happening there.

Thirdly, one must know and believe that enforcing Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar will not cause more significant damage or risk. For example, there is an alcohol or gambling party that involves large-scale congregations of Muslims, so a frontal prohibition that can cause mass murder and destruction is not required. Qâdi 'Abd al-Jabbâr emphasized that Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar, which leads to anarchism, is a bad thing that must be avoided.

Fourth, it must know correctly and be sure that what will be

done will improve change. So, if there is no conviction, Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar becomes obligatory because it will be futile. However, there is an opinion that Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar is still done because it is a moral responsibility and counts as a da'wah that invites people to obey religion.

Fifth, he must know and be sure that the Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar will not harm himself, his property, or his family. This fifth requirement does not apply absolutely; there are several exceptions given by Qâdi 'Abd al-Jabbâr; the exception is based on the object of da'wah. If the object does not have the potential to harm him, then carrying out Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar is highly recommended. Furthermore, the object of da'wah has different conditions from the first, namely the potential to endanger themselves, their property, and their families. Qâdi 'Abd al-Jabbâr responds to this situation by making the subject or perpetrator of da'wah a benchmark.

Problems arise when a Muslim cannot fulfill some of the above provisions. A Muslim who cannot enforce Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar because he does not fulfill the first condition has no obligation at all because it is the most fundamental requirement in the practice of Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar. If a person cannot fulfill the first condition, then the second and third conditions cannot be fulfilled, and he is not obliged to enforce *amr al-ma'rûf wa nahy 'an al-Munkar*.

The difference of opinion occurs when the fourth condition is unmet, namely, knowing that his call (da'wah) will have an effect. The first opinion states that Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar will be useless and pointless because it is clear that it will not have any effect. Nevertheless, the second opinion says that Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar will still have its goodness, even though it does not directly affect the perpetrators of evil. The Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar that he does will be counted as good deeds because he has preached in the way of Allah. The absence of this fourth condition also negates the fulfillment of the fifth condition. (Qaḍi 'Abd Al-Jabbâr, 2009, pp. 146–147)

Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar can be implemented practically when these terms and conditions are met. The practice of Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar must begin with the easiest way, then gradually increase according to the difficulty of implementation and the level of evil that occurs. The higher the level of evil, the stricter and harsher the means of prevention used.

On a more practical level, it can be said that when someone sees

someone else leaving the prayer (*târik al-ṣalâh*), everyone must deny it. Still, for cases that are more severe and require more assertive handling (fighting), the main thing to do is to be competent according to their capacity. (Qaḍi 'Abd Al-Jabbâr, 2009, p. 144) It seems that what Qâdi 'Abd al-Jabbâr means by *farḍu kifâyah* is *kifâyah* according to his capacity and competence; for those who are competent to handle Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar with their power, they must do it with their power; for those who are competent to deal with it with the tongue and *ḥujjab*, they must deal with it with the tongue and *ḥujjab*; and for those whose capacity is only able to deal with the heart (denying and hating), they must respond with the heart.

## Conclusion

From the above process, it can be understood that the literature of turâth Islamy (Islamic Intellectual Heritage) records well the concept and procedures for applying Amar Makruf Nahi Munkar. This can be seen from the detailed thoughts and descriptions of the Ulama on this issue. As stated in the previous section, the scholars' consensus has determined that implementing Amar Makruf Nahi Munkar is obligatory *kifâyah*. Nevertheless, Qâdi 'Abd al-Jabbâr further explains, in his book *Sharḥ al-Ushûl al-Khamsah*, that every Muslim should be concerned with dealing with Amar Makruf Nahi Munkar according to their respective capacities.

Scholars agree that the overall enforcement of Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar must be done procedurally and not haphazardly. It can be done by following the terms or procedures that have been agreed upon. Another understanding obtained through a series of explanations above is that enforcing Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar is very humane because there are pillars and conditions that, if followed or guided as a standard of operation (sop), no one party will be harmed. This practice is also a form of concern and responsibility for a Muslim person, both for himself and for the environment in which he lives.

The Ulama has formulated the procedures for implementing Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar in great detail and clarity. Therefore, according to capacity and competence, inviting someone to do what is al-ma'rûf and preventing what is al-Munkar should be done excellently.

The signs that the Ulama have made are straightforward to apply. They can avoid or at least minimize social conflict (social

friction) because they aim to prevent individuals and groups from anarchism in the application of *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar*, which ultimately can be detrimental to both himself and the group.

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