

## Islamic Tolerance as an Ethics of Coexistence in Muḥammad ‘Imārah’s Thought

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history

Received March 13, 2026

Revised April 16, 2026

Accepted May 17, 2026

**Keywords:** Islamic tolerance;  
coexistence ethics; Muḥammad  
‘Imārah; content analysis; religious  
moderation

#### ABSTRACT

Debates on Islamic tolerance continue to turn on the relation between doctrinal conviction, freedom of conscience, and public coexistence in plural societies. This article examines how Muḥammad ‘Imārah’s Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah constructs Islamic tolerance as coexistence ethics. Using directed qualitative content analysis, the study analyzes textual units concerning Qur’anic non-coercion, the Medina Charter, the Najran Covenant, historical coexistence, and critiques of coercive exclusivism. The analysis shows that ‘Imārah organizes tolerance through four interrelated categories: theological non-coercion, constitutional pluralism, active protection of religious communities, and historical participation in Islamic civilization. Its contribution lies in reading Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah as a unified textual construction that links faith, law, citizenship, protection, and participation. Indonesia is used only as a theoretical context for discussing the relevance of these categories to religious moderation and national coexistence, not as an empirical field site. The article argues that al-samāḥah can function as an Islamic ethical-political vocabulary for defending religious freedom, inclusive citizenship, minority protection, and interfaith solidarity in plural societies.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Islamic studies continues to examine how religious conviction can coexist with freedom of conscience and civic equality. The issue is not merely theological. It concerns how religious communities understand difference, how states regulate religious plurality, and how citizens build peaceful relations across doctrinal boundaries. UNESCO defines tolerance as respect, acceptance, and appreciation of the diversity of cultures, forms of expression, and ways of being human (UNESCO., 1995). Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the freedom to manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance (United Nations., 1948). In Indonesia, this principle is supported by Article 28E and Article 29(2) of the 1945 Constitution, Law Number 39 of 1999 on Human Rights, and Law Number 12 of 2005 ratifying the ICCPR (Republic of Indonesia., 1945, 1999, 2005). The urgency of this discussion is reinforced by global restrictions on religion. Pew Research Center reported that government restrictions on religion in 2022 remained at the highest median level in its long-term measurement, with 59 countries in the high or very high category (Majumdar, 2024). Such data place tolerance within a field of legal, political, educational, and theological concern. In Muslim societies, the discussion is frequently connected with religious moderation, interfaith relations, minority protection, and resistance to exclusivist interpretations. The Indonesian experience also

illustrates the complex relation between Islamic teachings, Pancasila, constitutional guarantees, and socio-cultural integration in sustaining coexistence among Muslims and followers of other religions (Subchi, Zulkifli, Latifa, & Sa'diyah, 2022; Zaim, 2024). Within Islamic discourse, tolerance rests on both doctrinal distinction and ethical relations with others. Qur'anic verses such as Q.S. 2:256, Q.S. 18:29, Q.S. 109:6, and Q.S. 5:48 provide a normative basis for non-coercion, moral responsibility, the recognition of religious difference, and the governance of plurality through justice and public civility. Classical tafsīr reads Q.S. 109 as preserving theological distinction and Q.S. 2:256 as prohibiting forced conversion (Ibn Kathīr, n.d.). Islamic tolerance, therefore, does not require the dissolution of religious identity. It can be framed as respect for the presence of others, protection of conscience, and the management of difference through law, justice, and public ethics. Recent scholarship on Islamic tolerance has developed in several directions. Abou El Fadl (2002) identifies moral resources in the Islamic tradition for resisting authoritarian puritanism and cultivating tolerance. Sachedina (2001) situates Islamic pluralism within civil society, freedom of conscience, the status of non-Muslims, peace, and moral responsibility. Pizzi (2024) discusses non-compulsion through Jawdat Sa'īd's interpretation of Q.S. 2:256. Rane (2022, 2023, 2024) analyzes prophetic covenants and Qur'anic covenantal terms as resources for interreligious relations, human security, and peaceful coexistence. Agbaria (2022) examines tensions between inclusive and exclusive interpretations in Islamic education, while Aderibigbe et al. (2023) show how Islamic education can strengthen tolerance through course design and authentic learning. Studies on the Medina Charter and the Najran Covenant further enrich this field. Hamidullah (1975) and Serjeant (1978) treated the Medina document as a key source for understanding the Prophet's early political community.

Recent studies have returned to the Charter as a model for social unity, consensus-based political communication, and pluralistic community development (Ghozali, 2025; Jusoh, Nawi, Embong, & Rahmat, 2024; Samosir, Hussin, Sudianto, & Azman., 2025). Research on Najran adds another layer. El-Wakil (2016) offers a source-critical study of the Prophet's treaty with the Christians of Najran, while Wood (2021) reads the Najran narrative in the Chronicle of Seert as an Abbasid-era reworking of Christian rights. Alomari, Al-Share, & Mohammed (2024) examine the Najran covenant as a model of social security and religious pluralism. Existing studies have discussed Islamic non-coercion, religious pluralism, prophetic covenants, the Medina Charter, the Najran Covenant, and Indonesian religious moderation. However, these studies often treat those themes separately and have not sufficiently examined Muḥammad 'Imārah's Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah as an integrated discourse on tolerance. The gap addressed in this article is therefore conceptual: how 'Imārah connects Qur'anic non-coercion, prophetic covenants, historical coexistence, and citizenship ethics into a coherent framework of Islamic tolerance. This article addresses that gap by offering a directed qualitative content analysis of Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah. Its novelty lies not merely in selecting 'Imārah as the object of study, but in reconstructing his concept of al-samāḥah as an ethics of coexistence. This reconstruction shows that Islamic tolerance in 'Imārah's thought consists of four interrelated dimensions: theological non-coercion, constitutional pluralism, active protection of religious communities, and historical participation across religious boundaries. By linking these dimensions to the Indonesian discourse of religious moderation, this article contributes a conceptual model that connects Islamic intellectual tradition with contemporary debates on citizenship, minority protection, and national coexistence. The emphasis on 'Imārah is significant because his work moves from Qur'anic non-coercion to civic and historical arguments. It begins with the inner logic of faith, develops a political vocabulary for citizenship and protection, and then uses historical memory to challenge narratives that associate Islam with coercion. This structure allows the article to examine al-samāḥah not only as a moral

virtue but also as an ethical-political vocabulary linking faith, law, citizenship, protection, and participation. Indonesia functions in this article as a theoretical context of relevance, not as an empirical field site. The evidence comes from textual analysis of *Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah*. The Indonesian context is used to ask how the categories generated from ‘Imārah’s text may conceptually enrich discussions of religious moderation, Pancasila, constitutional freedom of religion, majority-minority relations, and national coexistence in a Muslim-majority society. This article asks three questions. First, how does Muḥammad ‘Imārah construct Islamic tolerance in *Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah*? Second, what elements shape that construction as coexistence ethics? Third, how can ‘Imārah’s discourse conceptually enrich discussions of religious moderation and national coexistence in Indonesia? The article proceeds through method, findings and discussion, and conclusion. The findings are organized around theological non-coercion, constitutional pluralism, protection of Christian communities, historical coexistence, and ‘Imārah’s contribution to religious moderation.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using directed qualitative content analysis. The material object is Muḥammad ‘Imārah’s *Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah*, published by Nahḍat Miṣr in Cairo without a publication year. The formal object is the construction of Islamic tolerance as an ethics of coexistence. Directed qualitative content analysis is appropriate because the research starts from categories informed by theory and previous scholarship while allowing refinements from the primary text (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis also enables systematic inference from text to context through replicable and transparent interpretive procedures (Krippendorff, 2013; Mayring, 2021). The primary data consist of textual units in *Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah* that discuss *al-samāḥah*, religious freedom, the Medina Charter, relations with Jewish communities, the covenant with the Christians of Najran, historical coexistence, and comparative critique of exclusivism (‘Imārah, n.d.). The secondary data include books, journal articles, international legal documents, and Indonesian legal documents related to tolerance, religious freedom, pluralism, citizenship, covenants, and religious moderation. Recent journal articles from 2021 to 2026 receive special attention in the introduction and discussion to sharpen the state of the art and clarify the article’s contribution. The unit of analysis is a meaning unit in the text, consisting of phrases, sentences, paragraphs, historical quotations, or sequences of argument related to Islamic tolerance. The research uses seven initial categories: theological non-coercion, constitutional pluralism, protection of non-Muslim communities, citizenship ethics, historical coexistence, critique of religious exclusivism, and national coexistence. These categories were derived deductively from the research questions, the conceptual vocabulary of tolerance studies, and the structure of ‘Imārah’s argument. During coding, the categories were refined by returning to the primary text and by comparing emerging meanings with recent scholarship. The analysis began with a full reading of ‘Imārah’s text, followed by the identification of passages related to *al-samāḥah*, non-coercion, prophetic covenants, citizenship, and interreligious relations. First, the whole text was read to identify the overall structure of ‘Imārah’s argument. Second, relevant passages were inventoried, especially those containing *al-samāḥah*, non-coercion, *ahl al-kitāb*, *ahl al-dhimmah*, the Medina Charter, the Najran Covenant, citizenship, and rejection of forced religion. Third, those passages were segmented into meaning units. Fourth, each unit was coded using the initial categories and analytic memos. Fifth, the codes were grouped into thematic patterns that became the main findings. Sixth, the findings were discussed with contemporary scholarship to formulate ‘Imārah’s contribution to coexistence ethics and Indonesian religious moderation. Analytical consistency was maintained through repeated reading, memo writing, category checking, and verification of Arabic quotations against the primary material.

Indonesia is used as a conceptual context for theoretical contribution; the research evidence remains textual. The coding scheme was designed to maintain a close relationship between the primary text and the structure of the findings. The category of theological non-coercion was used for Qur'anic passages and arguments on freedom of belief. Constitutional pluralism was used for clauses related to the Medina Charter, citizenship, equal protection, and common responsibility. Protection of religious communities was used for the Najran clauses concerning persons, property, ecclesiastical authority, worship spaces, and family life. Historical coexistence was used for passages on the survival and participation of non-Muslim communities in Islamic civilization. Critique of exclusivism was used for comparative passages on coercion, inquisition, colonial power, and missionary projects.

The tables were produced as analytic summaries of selected primary evidence. Each table contains four elements: primary textual evidence, meaning or translation, thematic code, and analytical significance. Arabic evidence was checked against the supplied primary material. When the supplied text contained orthographic or transcription inconsistencies, the table used a normalized form for readability and preserved the meaning of the primary evidence. This decision is stated through the phrase primary textual evidence. The narrative following each table explains the argument and keeps the table as support for the analysis. The study's limitation is methodological. Directed content analysis produces a conceptual map of a text and leaves reader reception or institutional implementation for future empirical research. The conclusions therefore refer to the internal construction of 'Imārah's thought and to its conceptual relevance for plural societies. Claims about Indonesian practice are limited to theoretical implications supported by recent scholarship on religious moderation and coexistence. This boundary protects the analysis from overextending textual evidence into empirical claims.

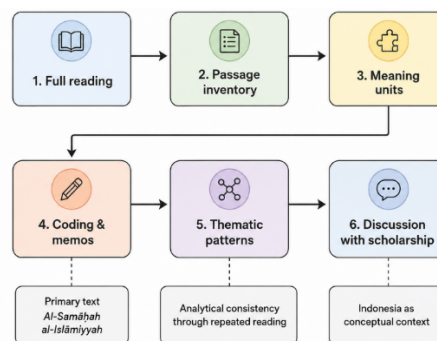


Figure 1. Flow of directed qualitative content analysis

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Theological Non-Coercion as the Foundation of Islamic Tolerance

At the center of 'Imārah's account of Islamic tolerance stands the principle of non-coercion. In *Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah*, he places religious freedom within Qur'anic principles that prohibit coercion, affirm moral responsibility, and recognize religious difference as part of divine wisdom ('Imārah, n.d.). This construction begins with Q.S 2:256, then expands through Q.S 18:29, Q.S 109:6, and Q.S 5:48. These verses establish a normative sequence: faith requires freedom, freedom requires responsibility, responsibility presupposes the moral agency of human beings, and plural religious communities require public ethics.

**Table 1.** Theological Non-Coercion in ‘Imārah’s Construction of Islamic Tolerance

Primary textual evidence	Meaning/translation	Thematic code	Analytical significance
لا إكراه في الدين	There is no compulsion in religion.	Prohibition of religious coercion	Faith is valid as a conscious moral act grounded in free conviction.
فمن شاء فليؤمن ومن شاء فليكفر	Whoever wills may believe, and whoever wills may disbelieve.	Freedom of religious choice	Human beings appear as moral subjects responsible for their choices.
لكم دينكم ولي دين	For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.	Doctrinal differentiation	The text preserves theological identity while recognizing the presence of other communities.
لكل جعلنا منكم شرعة ومنهاجا	For each community We have appointed a law and a path.	Plurality as divine order	Religious plurality becomes a reality to be governed through justice and civility.
جسدتها عهد ومواثيق رسول الله مع اليهود والنصارى	The Prophet’s covenants with Jews and Christians embodied these Qur’anic principles.	Normative actualization	Qur’anic non-coercion gains social and political expression through prophetic documents.

Table 1 shows that non-coercion is the entry point of ‘Imārah’s argument. The phrase *lā ikrahā fī al-dīn* defines faith as a free act of conscience and rejects forced conversion as religiously meaningless. The second and third textual units add the idea of responsibility and doctrinal boundaries. The fourth textual unit links plurality to divine order, while the fifth connects the Qur’anic principle to the Prophet’s covenants. In this structure, tolerance moves from creed to social order. It begins with the freedom of conscience and reaches the public management of difference. This finding is consistent with contemporary studies on Islamic non-coercion. Pizzi (2024) shows that *Jawdat Sa’id* places Q.S 2:256 at the center of a social hermeneutic of nonviolence and freedom of belief. ‘Imārah uses a different textual strategy through covenants and historical comparison, and he also treats non-coercion as an internal Islamic principle. Abou El Fadl (2002) helps clarify this position by reading tolerance through justice, mercy, and moral responsibility. Sachedina (2001) adds that freedom of conscience and the status of non-Muslims are integral to Islamic pluralism. Through these connections, ‘Imārah’s argument can be read as a modern Islamic contribution to coexistence ethics. The educational relevance of this finding appears in recent studies on Islamic pluralism and tolerance. Agbaria (2022) argues that Islamic education should engage the plurality of meanings in Qur’anic discourse and present pluralism through open interpretation. Aderibigbe et al. (2023) show that Islamic education can cultivate tolerance and respect for diversity when learning is connected to real social contexts. Subchi et al. (2022) show that religious moderation in Indonesia is shaped by tolerance, national commitment, rejection of violence, and acceptance of local culture. ‘Imārah’s non-coercive theology offers a textual foundation for those educational and civic projects. It provides a language of faith that supports freedom of religion, moral responsibility, and peaceful relations across religious boundaries. The category of theological non-coercion also clarifies the relation between conviction and social ethics. In ‘Imārah’s discourse, firm belief in Islam supports disciplined conduct toward other communities. Doctrinal commitment and social recognition operate together. This means that the believer can maintain the truth claim of Islam and accept the legal and moral presence of other religious groups. The category resists two extremes: religious relativism that dissolves doctrinal identity, and exclusivism that turns doctrinal difference into social coercion. The

analytic importance of this finding appears when non-coercion is connected with public responsibility. Freedom of belief appears as a moral trust linked to accountability before God and to the ethical conduct of Muslims toward others. This connection gives ‘Imārah’s argument a theological depth that modern legal vocabulary sometimes lacks. The right of the other to remain different becomes meaningful because authentic faith requires free conviction. A forced confession has no moral value in the logic of this argument.

### 3.2 Constitutional Pluralism in the Medina Charter

From theological non-coercion, ‘Imārah moves to the civic order of Medina, where religious plurality receives constitutional form. ‘Imārah reads the Medina Charter as the first public framework in which religious plurality became part of the political order. He describes the document as al-ṣaḥīfah or al-kitāb that established religious plurality in the first Islamic polity and affirmed justice and fairness in citizenship rights (‘Imārah, n.d.). Tolerance in this section becomes a public norm that regulates membership, protection, shared responsibility, and conflict resolution.

**Table 2.** Constitutional Pluralism in the Medina Charter

Primary textual evidence	Meaning	Thematic code	Analytical significance
نص الدستور... على التعددية الدينية ...وعلى مساواة العدل والإنصاف في حقوق المواطنة	The constitution affirmed religious plurality and equality in citizenship rights.	Constitutional pluralism	Religious difference receives public and legal recognition in the first Islamic polity.
لليهود دينهم وللمسلمين دينهم	The Jews have their religion and the Muslims have their religion.	Recognition of religious identity	Coexistence protects the religious identity of each community.
فإن لهم النصر والأسوة غير مظلومين ولا متناصر عليهم	They receive support and equal treatment without being wronged.	Equal protection	Citizenship includes security, support, and protection from injustice.
وعلى اليهود نفقتهم وعلى المسلمين نفقتهم	The Jews bear their expenses and the Muslims bear their expenses.	Shared civic responsibility	Rights are paired with public responsibility for collective security.
فإن مرده إلى الله وإلى محمد رسول الله	Serious disputes return to God and Muhammad the Messenger of God.	Conflict resolution	Plural order requires a recognized mechanism for preventing social disorder.

Table 2 indicates that ‘Imārah treats the Medina Charter as a model of constitutional pluralism. The document preserves religious identity within a shared political community. The formula li-l-Yahūd dīnuhum wa-li-l-Muslimīn dīnuhum recognizes religious boundaries. The clauses on support, equal treatment, expense, and dispute resolution transform tolerance into a civic structure. In this sense, the Medina Charter places tolerance in law, citizenship, and shared security. Classical and contemporary studies support this reading while requiring careful historical awareness. Hamidullah (1975) regarded the Medina Charter as one of the earliest written constitutional documents. Serjeant (1978) treated it as a key source for understanding intergroup relations in the Prophet’s polity. Anello (2021) later described the Charter through the lens of contractual citizenship, which aligns with

‘Imārah’s emphasis on agreement, membership, rights, and duties. Recent studies by Jusoh et al. (2024) and Samosir et al. (2025) connect the Charter to social unity, consensus-based political communication, and plural societies. Ghozali (2025) also reads the Charter as a basis for community development rooted in justice, equality, and freedom. The value of ‘Imārah’s interpretation lies in his movement from textual evidence to a theory of civic belonging. The Jewish communities of Medina appear as members of a shared political order with their own religious identity, legal protection, and public obligations. This reading speaks directly to modern debates on majority-minority relations. It suggests that religious difference can be held within a common civic framework when rights, duties, and mechanisms of dispute resolution are defined. In the Indonesian context, this argument resonates with the constitutional protection of religious freedom and the Pancasila-based commitment to social unity. A further implication concerns the term *ummah*. ‘Imārah’s reading emphasizes that the first Islamic polity transformed tribal groups into a shared political community. This transformation preserved religious difference and reorganized social membership through a common covenant. Such a reading is significant for contemporary citizenship because it challenges the assumption that a religiously grounded polity must place other communities outside the political body. In ‘Imārah’s interpretation, the civic body includes religious difference under a framework of justice and public order. The Medina Charter also gives tolerance a procedural dimension. Protection and recognition require mechanisms that regulate conflict. ‘Imārah’s attention to the clause on returning disputes to God and the Prophet indicates that coexistence needs authority, norms, and procedures. A plural society needs shared rules, recognized channels of arbitration, and obligations that prevent external enemies or internal conflict from destroying the community. The Charter thus becomes a model of political ethics: difference is acknowledged, obligations are distributed, and disorder is addressed through a covenantal framework.

### 3.3 Protection of Christian Communities in the Najran Covenant

The Najran Covenant extends the civic logic of tolerance into the active protection of Christian communities. After presenting the Medina Charter, ‘Imārah extends the logic of tolerance to the Prophet’s agreement with the Christians of Najran. He describes the agreement as a constitutional covenant that affirms religious plurality, equality in rights and obligations, protection of persons and property, preservation of religious authority, and freedom from forced conversion (‘Imārah, n.d.). The ethical focus expands from recognition to active protection.

**Table 3.** Protection of Christian Communities in the Najran Covenant

Primary textual evidence	Meaning/translation	Thematic code	Analytical significance
جوار الله وذمة محمد النبي رسول الله على أموالهم وأنفسهم وملتهم	They have the protection of God and the pledge of Muhammad over their property, persons, and religion.	Protection of life, property, and religion	Coexistence includes security for persons, possessions, and religious identity.
لا يغير أسقف من أسقفية ولا راهب من رهبانيته	No bishop is removed from his bishopric and no monk from his monastic life.	Protection of religious authority	The covenant respects the internal structure of the Christian community.
لا يكلفون بالقتال، ولا يعشرون، ولا يطاء أرضهم جيش	They are not burdened with fighting, tithe, or military occupation of their land.	Limitation of political burden	Protection includes fair limits on military and fiscal obligations.

ولا يجبر أحد من كان على ملة النصرانية كرها على الإسلام	No Christian is forced into Islam.	Freedom from forced conversion	Religious freedom remains binding in Muslim-Christian relations.
أن أحمي جانبهم وأذب عنهم وعن كنائسهم وبيعهم وبيوت صلواتهم	I protect them, their churches, places of worship, and houses of prayer.	Institutional protection	The covenant protects religious buildings as part of communal religious freedom.

Table 3 shows a concrete pattern of protection. The Najran Covenant, as presented by ‘Imārah, protects life, property, religion, ecclesiastical authority, houses of worship, and family religious freedom. This pattern gives tolerance an institutional dimension. Christians appear as a religious community with recognized rights, internal leadership, spaces of worship, and civic responsibilities. The clause preventing forced conversion links the Najran Covenant with the Qur’anic principle of non-coercion discussed in the first finding. The academic discussion of Najran requires a critical stance toward historicity and textual transmission. El-Wakil (2016) compares Islamic sources and covenant texts to assess the authority of the Prophet’s treaties with Christians. Wood (2021) reads the Najran material in the Chronicle of Seert as an Abbasid-era reimagining that negotiated Christian rights within Islamic rule. These studies caution against using the Najran text as a simple historical proof. They also show that the memory of Najran became a powerful normative resource for articulating Christian rights. This helps locate ‘Imārah’s use of Najran as a normative and argumentative reconstruction within modern Islamic thought. Recent covenant studies strengthen the conceptual value of this finding. Rane (2022) demonstrates that knowledge of the Prophet’s covenants can influence interfaith actors’ perceptions of interreligious relations in Islam. Rane (2023) further argues that covenants in the Qur’an provide an overarching paradigm for human existence and coexistence. His 2024 study links Islamic covenants to human security and peaceful coexistence (Rane, 2024). Alomari et al. (2024) also interpret the Najran Covenant as a model of social security based on civil liberties, rights, justice, equality, and freedom of worship. Through this scholarly context, ‘Imārah’s Najran argument can be read as a theology of active protection. It frames the security of another religious community as a responsibility internal to Islamic ethics. The Najran material adds a detailed account of religious institutions. The clauses on bishops, monks, churches, hermitages, and houses of prayer show that freedom of religion includes the continuity of communal structures. A religion survives through leaders, ritual spaces, legal customs, family practices, and educational transmission. ‘Imārah’s use of the Najran Covenant therefore expands tolerance from the individual conscience to the collective life of a religious community. Family life is especially important in the broader Najran passage. The text cited by ‘Imārah protects Christian women from forced marriage with Muslims and allows a Christian wife of a Muslim husband to maintain her Christian religious practice. This clause shows how religious freedom enters domestic relations. The protection of conscience is tested in intimate settings where social pressure can be strong. By including this material, ‘Imārah presents tolerance as a principle that governs public institutions and family relations. The result is a dense model of coexistence that covers law, worship, leadership, property, territory, and household life.

### 3.4 Historical Coexistence and the Critique of Religious Exclusivism

‘Imārah then turns to history, using the survival and participation of non-Muslim communities as evidence for his broader argument about coexistence. In the sections on Islamic history, comparative perspective, and conclusion, ‘Imārah presents tolerance as a civilizational practice. He argues that non-Muslim communities continued to live under Islamic rule for centuries, participated in Islamic civilization, and retained their religious identities. He compares this experience with examples of religious coercion, war, inquisition, and colonial-missionary projects (‘Imārah, n.d.).

The argument has a polemical tone and reveals the role of history in his construction of Islamic tolerance.

**Table 4.** Historical Coexistence and Critique of Exclusivism

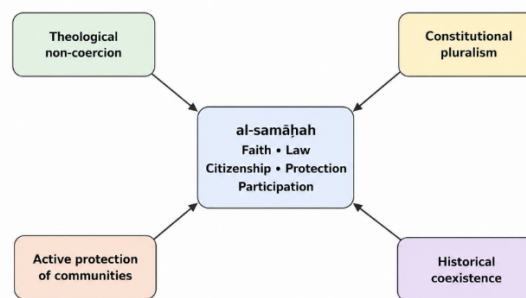
Primary textual evidence	Meaning/translation	Thematic code	Analytical significance
استمرت هذه السياسة الإسلامية مرعية في الدولة الإسلامية والحضارة الإسلامية والتاريخ الإسلامي	This Islamic policy continued in the Islamic state, civilization, and history.	Continuity of tolerance	'Imārah presents tolerance as a historical pattern with institutional continuity.
ظلوا أغلبية غير مسلمة في بلادهم لعدة قرون	They remained non-Muslim majorities in their lands for several centuries.	Continuity of non-Muslim communities	The survival of non-Muslim communities functions as evidence of social space under Islamic rule.
فتح أمام هذا الآخر باب الإسهام في بناء الحضارة الإسلامية الجديدة	Islam opened the door for the religious other to contribute to the new Islamic civilization.	Civilizational participation	Coexistence includes participation in knowledge, administration, and public life.
فترات التوتر والاضطهاد لغير المسلمين ... كانت قصيرة	Periods of tension and persecution of non-Muslims were brief.	Tension as historical deviation	'Imārah separates normative Islamic principles from local political and social crises.
تمكن هذا الآخر ... جزءا من عقيدة الإسلام وواجبا من واجبات الدولة الإسلامية	Enabling the other to practice his religion becomes part of Islamic belief and a duty of the Islamic state.	Recognition of the religious other	Tolerance becomes a duty of state and society grounded in religious commitment.

Table 4 indicates that historical evidence performs two functions in 'Imārah's discourse. First, it shows continuity. The presence of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian communities in Muslim-ruled regions demonstrates, in his view, that Islamic tolerance operated beyond theory. Second, it shows participation. Non-Muslims contributed to translation, science, philosophy, administration, and state institutions. Coexistence therefore becomes a form of shared civilization with institutional and intellectual participation. The critical element appears in 'Imārah's comparison with other histories of religious coercion. He contrasts the Islamic model with the European wars of religion, the Inquisition, forced Christianization, colonial intervention, and missionary strategies. This comparison functions as a rhetorical device to challenge representations of Islam as inherently intolerant. The argument also carries a risk of selectivity because it tends to highlight Islamic success and explain episodes of Muslim intolerance through local, economic, political, or foreign factors. Brown's (2006) critique of tolerance discourse is useful here because tolerance can carry claims of power, identity, and moral superiority. 'Imārah's historical comparison should therefore be read as a normative reconstruction and an intellectual polemic that still requires historical-critical supplementation. Recent studies help balance this reading. Rane's work on covenants explains why early Islamic documents remain important for interreligious ethics (Rane, 2022, 2024). Agbaria (2022) reminds scholars that Islamic pluralism involves tensions between inclusive and exclusive interpretations. Al-Khalafat (2023) uses al-Andalus as a symbol of Islamic religious tolerance, while Zaim (2024) presents the modern Indonesian experience as a dynamic interaction between Islamic theology, state ideology, and socio-cultural adaptation. These studies show that historical coexistence requires conceptual, institutional, and social mediation. Through this lens, 'Imārah's historical

argument becomes most valuable when it is read critically: it offers a moral memory of coexistence, invites comparison with modern rights discourse, and requires awareness of historical complexity. The historical argument also shows how ‘Imārah links tolerance with civilizational participation. The presence of non-Muslims in translation, medicine, administration, and intellectual life suggests a wider form of coexistence. Protection alone creates safety. Participation creates belonging. For ‘Imārah, Islamic civilization becomes a shared arena in which different religious communities contribute to knowledge and governance while retaining their identities. This claim is important for modern plural societies because it moves beyond minimal toleration and toward shared public production. This section requires strong critical control. ‘Imārah sometimes presents Islamic history through a defensive posture shaped by modern debates about Islam and the West. The article therefore reads his historical claims as part of a normative discourse and leaves a complete history of Muslim relations with non-Muslims to specialized historical studies. Episodes of tension, discrimination, and violence in Muslim history need wider historical research. The critical value of ‘Imārah’s text lies in the ethical standard it articulates: coercion, persecution, and exclusion contradict the logic of al-samāḥah. This standard can be used for self-critique within Muslim societies and for responding to external stereotypes.

### 3.5 From Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah to Religious Moderation: ‘Imārah’s Contribution to National Coexistence

Taken together, the four categories in Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah form an ethical vocabulary for thinking about coexistence in plural societies. This vocabulary brings together theological non-coercion, constitutional pluralism, active protection of religious communities, and historical participation across religious boundaries. In the Indonesian context, this framework can contribute conceptually to religious moderation through a language of faith that supports freedom of conscience, inclusive citizenship, protection of religious communities, and critique of exclusivism. Indonesia functions here as a conceptual context for theoretical application.



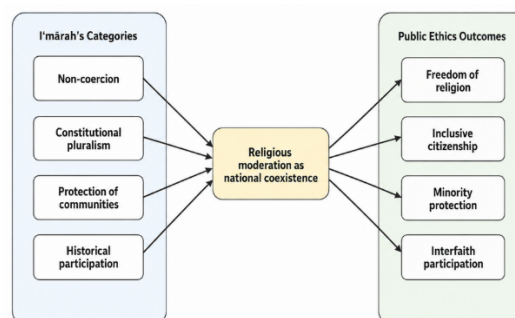
**Figure 1.** Coexistence ethics framework in Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah

Modern theories of tolerance help clarify ‘Imārah’s position. Forst (2013) distinguishes several conceptions of toleration, including permission, coexistence, respect, and esteem. ‘Imārah’s argument is closest to the conception of respect because other religious communities appear as moral subjects and political members with rights, protections, and responsibilities. The basis of justification differs from liberal political theory. Forst works through reciprocal justification and public reason. ‘Imārah works through revelation, prophetic documents, and Islamic history. This comparison shows that religious traditions can generate public arguments for coexistence through their own normative resources. Laborde’s (2017) account of liberalism and religion also helps refine this point. She argues that political theory should distinguish the politically relevant dimensions of religion and avoid treating religion as a single problem for liberal freedom. ‘Imārah’s thought illustrates this insight from within Islamic discourse. His references to non-coercion, covenant, citizenship, protection, and

public responsibility translate religious commitments into social principles. This movement gives al-samāḥah a civic vocabulary and a way to speak about religious freedom and public equality through Islamic sources. This position can also be compared with Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, Khaled Abou El Fadl, and Nurcholish Madjid. An-Na'im's constitutionalist project seeks to protect citizenship and human rights through the separation of state coercion from religious authority, whereas 'Imārah grounds public coexistence in revelation, prophetic covenants, and Islamic historical memory; both converge on equal citizenship but differ in their normative justification (An-Na'im, 2008). Abou El Fadl locates tolerance in justice, mercy, and resistance to authoritarian readings of Islam, while 'Imārah emphasizes covenantal precedent and civilizational evidence (Abou El Fadl, 2002). Nurcholish Madjid situates Islamic openness in the Indonesian synthesis of Islam, modernity, Pancasila, and inclusive nationalism; 'Imārah supplies a transnational Islamic vocabulary that can strengthen this Indonesian argument without dissolving doctrinal identity (Madjid, 1998). The framework also clarifies the relation between religious moderation and citizenship. In Indonesia, moderation is often described through the indicators of national commitment, tolerance, rejection of violence, and accommodation of local culture. 'Imārah's categories can deepen these indicators. National commitment gains a theological grammar through the Medina Charter and Najran Covenant, where loyalty to the public order is paired with protection of religious difference. Tolerance gains a doctrinal basis through non-coercion. Rejection of violence gains support through covenantal ethics. Cultural accommodation becomes easier when religious identity is joined with civic responsibility. Pancasila and the Constitution offer the national frame for this discussion. The first principle of Pancasila affirms belief in the One and Almighty God, while the constitutional order protects religious freedom and public citizenship. 'Imārah's thought can enter this frame because it treats faith and citizenship as connected ethical domains. His argument supports a public theology that values religious conviction, civic equality, and protection of communities. Such a theology is useful for a Muslim-majority society that seeks to maintain doctrinal identity and civic harmony in one national framework. The Indonesian policy context makes this conceptual contribution more concrete. The Ministry of Religious Affairs presents religious moderation through four indicators: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia., 2019). The National Medium-Term Development Plan 2020–2024 also places the strengthening of religious moderation within national development priorities (Republic of Indonesia., 2020). Another relevant policy instrument is the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Home Affairs Number 9 of 2006 and Number 8 of 2006, which regulates regional responsibility for religious harmony, the Religious Harmony Forum, and houses of worship (Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs., 2006). These policies show that Indonesian coexistence requires both normative commitment and institutional design.

Concrete Indonesian issues also illustrate the relevance of 'Imārah's categories. Debates around houses of worship, local restrictions on minority religious communities, and interfaith initiatives by state and civil society show that coexistence is not only an abstract constitutional ideal but also a recurring governance problem. Viewed through 'Imārah's framework, such cases require more than passive tolerance: freedom of conscience must be protected, public rules must be fair, houses of worship and religious leaders must be secured, and religious communities must be able to participate in shared national life ('Imārah, n.d.). This elaboration clarifies why Indonesia is used not as empirical fieldwork in this article, but as a theoretical context in which the ethical-political force of al-samāḥah can be tested conceptually. The concept of protection also deserves emphasis in the Indonesian context. Tolerance can become weak when it means passive endurance of difference. 'Imārah's reading of Najran points toward active protection: securing places of worship, respecting

religious leadership, preventing forced conversion, and allowing communities to maintain their religious life. This aspect can enrich discussions of minority rights because it shifts attention from mere coexistence to institutional security. Religious moderation then becomes a public ethic that protects vulnerable communities and strengthens trust among citizens. The critique of exclusivism gives religious moderation a self-corrective function. ‘Imārah criticizes coercive religion wherever it appears in his comparative narrative. A balanced use of his thought should apply the same ethical standard to Muslim communities. If coercion, humiliation, or exclusion appears in Muslim social practice, the principle of al-samāḥah requires correction (‘Imārah, n.d.). This self-critical reading makes ‘Imārah more useful for contemporary scholarship. His work can support Muslim confidence in Islamic ethical resources while encouraging accountability to the values those resources contain. The Indonesian relevance is especially visible in the discourse on religious moderation. Subchi et al. (2022) identify religious moderation among Indonesian Muslims through tolerance, national commitment, rejection of violence, and acceptance of local culture. Zaim (2024) describes Indonesian coexistence as a meeting point of Islamic principles, Pancasila, state policy, and socio-cultural integration. ‘Imārah’s framework contributes to this discourse in four ways. Theological non-coercion supports freedom of religion. Constitutional pluralism supports equal citizenship. The Najran model supports protection of religious institutions and communities. Historical coexistence supports interfaith participation in national life. This contribution should be formulated with critical balance. ‘Imārah’s comparative critique of the West can strengthen Muslim confidence in their own ethical tradition. It may also become apologetic when historical data are selected to favor an ideal image of Islamic civilization (‘Imārah, n.d.). A constructive reading retains the normative value of his argument and adds historical-critical awareness. Such a reading avoids triumphalist comparison and moves toward shared ethical questions: how religious communities protect conscience, prevent coercion, maintain citizenship, and build institutions that reduce violence. In this form, ‘Imārah’s thought can enrich Indonesian religious moderation by supplying a theological grammar for national coexistence. The theoretical contribution of this article can therefore be stated as follows. Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah shows that Islamic tolerance can be constructed as an ethical-political framework linking faith, law, citizenship, and social responsibility. The framework is textual because it emerges from Qur’anic principles and prophetic documents. It is conceptual because it organizes tolerance into categories of non-coercion, pluralism, protection, and participation. It is theoretical because it enters conversation with modern toleration and Indonesian religious moderation. It is practical because it offers religious language for freedom, minority protection, and interfaith solidarity in plural societies.



**Figure 2.** Conceptual contribution to Indonesian religious moderation and national coexistence

This contribution should be formulated with critical balance. ‘Imārah’s critique of Western coercive histories can strengthen Muslim confidence in their ethical tradition, but it may become apologetic if historical data are selected only to defend an ideal image of Islamic civilization. A

constructive reading retains the normative value of his argument while avoiding triumphalist comparison. It moves toward shared ethical questions: how religious communities protect conscience, prevent coercion, maintain citizenship, and build institutions that reduce violence. The theoretical contribution of this article can therefore be stated as follows. *Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah* shows that Islamic tolerance can be constructed as an ethical-political framework linking faith, law, citizenship, protection, and social responsibility. The framework is textual because it emerges from Qur'anic principles and prophetic documents; conceptual because it organizes tolerance into categories of non-coercion, pluralism, protection, and participation; and practical because it offers religious language for freedom, minority protection, and interfaith solidarity in plural societies.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This article has shown that Muḥammad ‘Imārah constructs Islamic tolerance in *Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah* as a layered ethics of coexistence. The first layer is theological non-coercion, through which faith is meaningful only as a free act of conscience. The second layer is constitutional pluralism, expressed through the Medina Charter as a covenantal framework of religious recognition, civic equality, shared responsibility, and conflict resolution. The third layer is active protection of religious communities, represented by the Najran Covenant through guarantees for life, property, religion, religious leadership, worship spaces, and freedom from forced conversion. The fourth layer is historical participation, through which ‘Imārah presents non-Muslim communities as contributors to Islamic civilization. The article contributes to Islamic studies in four ways. Textually, it reads *Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah* as a structured discourse on tolerance. Conceptually, it formulates *al-samāḥah* as coexistence ethics grounded in faith, law, citizenship, protection, and participation. Theoretically, it places ‘Imārah’s thought in conversation with modern toleration theory and Indonesian religious moderation. Methodologically, it demonstrates how directed qualitative content analysis can map categories in a modern Islamic text. For the Indonesian context, the framework offers conceptual resources for religious moderation rather than empirical findings. Theological non-coercion supports freedom of religion; constitutional pluralism supports inclusive citizenship; the Najran model supports minority protection; and historical participation supports interfaith solidarity. These outputs can help connect Islamic intellectual resources with Pancasila, constitutional freedom of religion, and national coexistence. The study is limited to textual analysis. It does not examine reader reception, educational implementation, interfaith practice, or policy outcomes. ‘Imārah’s historical comparisons also require critical contextualization because they are part of a normative and polemical discourse. Future research can compare *Al-Samāḥah al-Islāmiyyah* with other works of modern Muslim thinkers, examine the reception of ‘Imārah in Indonesian Islamic discourse, or test the relevance of his coexistence ethics in educational, interfaith, and public policy settings.

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