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Islamic political ethics and contemporary governance: Reassessing the Medina Charter in the Indonesian context

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Abstract

The Medina Charter was a political agreement that regulated a plural society through principles of unity, protection, justice, and shared responsibility. This study aims to identify the principles contained in its 47 clauses and analyze governance in Medina and its relevance to contemporary Indonesian governance. It employs a qualitative library-based approach, combining historical, conceptual, and statutory approaches with descriptive and normative-comparative analysis. The findings identify five thematic groups within the Charter: community formation and social solidarity; protection and justice; recognition of religious diversity; authority and responsibility; and security and peace. Governance in Medina also encompassed administration, public wealth management, market supervision, and dispute resolution. These principles remain relevant to Indonesia, particularly in protecting rights, promoting justice, resolving conflicts, advancing social welfare, and strengthening accountability. The contribution of this study lies in integrating the textual and historical examination of the Medina Charter with a normative and empirical assessment of Indonesian governance.

Keywords: Medina Charter; Governance of Medina; Religious pluralism; Constitutional justice; Indonesian governance.

Abstrak

Piagam Madinah merupakan kesepakatan politik yang mengatur kehidupan masyarakat majemuk melalui prinsip persatuan, perlindungan, keadilan, dan tanggung jawab bersama. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengidentifikasi prinsip-prinsip dalam 47 pasal Piagam Madinah serta menganalisis tata kelola pemerintahan Madinah dan relevansinya terhadap pemerintahan Indonesia kontemporer. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dengan pendekatan historis, konseptual, dan perundang-undangan melalui analisis deskriptif dan normatif-komparatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Piagam Madinah memuat lima kelompok prinsip, yaitu pembentukan umat dan solidaritas sosial; perlindungan dan keadilan; pengakuan keberagaman; otoritas dan tanggung jawab; serta keamanan dan perdamaian. Tata kelola pemerintahan Madinah mencakup administrasi, pengelolaan harta publik, pengawasan pasar, dan penyelesaian sengketa. Prinsip-prinsip tersebut relevan bagi Indonesia, khususnya dalam perlindungan hak, keadilan, resolusi konflik, kesejahteraan sosial, dan akuntabilitas. Kontribusi penelitian ini terletak pada pengintegrasian kajian tekstual dan historis Piagam Madinah dengan evaluasi normatif dan empiris tata kelola pemerintahan Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Piagam Madinah; Pemerintahan Madinah; Pluralisme agama; Keadilan konstitusional; Tata kelola pemerintahan Indonesia.

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Introduction

The Medina Charter emerged in a context in which Medina needed an agreement to curb violence and regulate relations among different groups. Through an analysis of legal-political rhetoric, Diab (2018) demonstrates that the document responded to violence in the newly established city-state by formulating a framework of rights and obligations for its inhabitants. The Charter not only united society across religious and tribal affiliations but also affirmed equal status, freedom of religion, justice, and institutional mechanisms for securing these rights. This finding indicates that the central issue addressed by the Medina Charter was not merely religious identity, but rather how differences could be regulated within a political order. Accordingly, the Charter should be examined in terms of the concrete principles and arrangements that shaped communal life. In this respect, it served as an instrument for establishing political order rather than merely expressing a moral appeal for tolerance.

This plural dimension is also evident in Nurjanah's (2019) study of the social structure of Medina. Through library research, she found that Muslim and non-Muslim communities possessed rights and obligations within the polity, while each retained the ability to observe rules associated with its own beliefs. The agreement among these communities was intended to maintain security against both internal and external threats. This finding is significant because it demonstrates that unity under the Medina Charter was not achieved by eliminating differences, but through the recognition of distinct identities and shared responsibilities. A further question, therefore, concerns how this social agreement functioned as a basis for governance: who exercised authority, how wealth and security were managed, and how disputes were resolved. These aspects must be examined as an integrated whole rather than separated from their sociopolitical context. This principle provided the foundation for cross-community political solidarity and the continuity of collective life in Medina.

The debate surrounding the constitutional status of the Medina Charter highlights the need for a non-anachronistic interpretation. In a normative legal study employing modern constitutional theory, Sadzali (2020) concludes that the *Ṣaḥīfat al-Madīnah* can be understood as a basic form of constitution suited to the needs of society at the time. The document contains elements of constitutionalism, although it does not encompass all the features found in modern constitutions. Ishak and Ab Aziz (2022) likewise identify similarities between the purposes of the Charter and those of modern constitutions, while questioning the validity of equating them entirely. These findings caution against claiming that the Medina Charter is identical to a contemporary state constitution. Instead, more productive questions concern the principles it embodies, how those principles operated in the governance practices of Medina, and the extent to which they can be compared with Indonesian governance without overlooking differences in historical periods, state structures, and legal systems.

Previous studies have examined the Medina Charter from several perspectives, yet they have not fully integrated an examination of its provisions, governance practices, and contemporary relevance into a single analysis. El Hakim (2021) highlights limitations on the exercise of power and the protection of rights, including through the mechanism of *šūrā*, and examines their relevance to the Indonesian Constitution. Mohammed Hasan et al. (2025) identify nationhood, social security, and shared responsibility as foundations of citizenship. Meanwhile, Mohd Fadzli et al. (2026) trace the development of the concept of citizenship through the Pledge of al-ʿAqaba (*Bayʿat al-ʿAqaba*) and the concept of *ummah wāḥidah*. Nevertheless, these studies have not jointly mapped all 47 clauses, examined Medina's governance practices, and assessed their relevance against Indonesian regulations and empirical data. Furthermore, the first study does not examine Medina's governance practices in detail, while the latter two focus more on nationhood and citizenship than on administration, fiscal management, markets, and judicial affairs within a broader historical account.

In response to this research gap, this study aims to analyze the principles embodied in the 47 clauses of the Medina Charter, examine the governance and sociopolitical dynamics of Medina, and assess their relevance to contemporary Indonesian governance. It does not seek to equate the form of governance in seventh-century Medina with that of the modern state, nor does it claim that Indonesian regulations derive directly from the Medina Charter. The significance of this study lies in the need for a historical examination that can be conceptually assessed and compared with contemporary governance challenges. By connecting the Charter's text and historical practices with legislation and official data, this study seeks to expand scholarship on the Medina Charter beyond debates over its constitutional status toward an analysis of its principles and their contemporary application. Its findings offer a critical perspective for evaluating the protection of diversity, justice, solidarity, social welfare, and government accountability. Specifically, Indonesia is positioned as a context for evaluation rather than as an object for replicating Medina's institutions.

Method

This study employs a qualitative library-based research design with a historical and normative-comparative orientation (Deriza et al., 2026). It examines the principles embodied in the Medina Charter, analyzes governance practices during the time of Prophet Muhammad, and assesses their relevance to contemporary Indonesian governance. To achieve these objectives, the study adopts three approaches: the historical approach, the conceptual approach, and the statutory approach. The historical approach is used to examine the sociopolitical background to the formation of the Medina Charter and the development of governance practices in Medina. The conceptual approach is applied to identify the political and constitutional principles embedded in the Charter. Meanwhile, the statutory approach is employed to examine

the relationship between these principles and Indonesia's constitution and legislation (Marzuki, 2017; Muhaimin, 2020).

The research draws on library-based materials classified according to their functions and levels of authority. Primary historical sources include the text of the Medina Charter as presented in Hamidullah's (1975) edition and hadith reports concerning administrative practices, judicial affairs, and the organization of communal life, particularly those found in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, and *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. Primary legal materials comprise the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and relevant legislation concerning freedom of religion, human rights, social conflict management, state finance, and zakat administration. Secondary sources consist of books on Islamic history and political thought, constitutional literature, and scholarly journal articles addressing the Medina Charter and contemporary governance issues. The study also draws on official reports published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Supreme Court of Indonesia, the National Board of Zakat (BAZNAS), the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, and the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) as supporting sources for examining the empirical conditions of governance in Indonesia.

Data collection was conducted through documentary research by identifying, selecting, and classifying sources according to their credibility, relevance, and connection to the research focus. The data were analyzed qualitatively through three stages. First, historical-textual analysis was conducted by examining the contents of the 47 clauses of the Medina Charter and grouping them into five thematic categories based on similarities in their principles and substance, while also examining Medina's governance practices through historical sources and hadith reports. Second, descriptive-conceptual analysis was undertaken to explain these principles and relate them to administrative practices, public wealth management, market activities, and dispute resolution in Medina. Third, normative-comparative analysis was employed to compare the principles of the Medina Charter with Indonesian legal provisions and official data to identify their relevance and the gaps between normative frameworks and their implementation. Analytical rigor was maintained through cross-checking historical sources and verifying data against official documents issued by the relevant institutions.

Results and Discussion

Reading the 47 clauses of the Medina Charter: Principles and the social order

The Medina Charter (*Ṣaḥīfat al-Madīnah*), drafted around 622 CE, is an important document in the political and legal history of Islam because it regulated the lives of Medina's socially, tribally, and religiously diverse population. Modern scholarship on this document includes Wellhausen (1889), who examined pre-Islamic society in Medina and the regulations governing the community during the Prophet's lifetime.

Hamidullah (1975) subsequently popularized the interpretation of the Medina Charter as the world's first written constitution. However, this designation remains subject to scholarly debate. Lecker (2004) compared two versions of the text and examined the Muslim and Jewish groups included in the agreement. Anjum (2024) cautions that the terms *kitāb* and *ṣaḥīfah* in early sources must be considered before the document is classified as either a constitution or a treaty. Therefore, the Medina Charter must be examined critically, with due consideration given to its wording and historical context.

An analysis of the 47 clauses should connect their textual provisions to the context in which the political community was formed. Wheare (1966) explains the function of a written constitution in regulating governmental structures and powers, whereas Schmitt (2008) understands it as a fundamental political decision that determines the order of a community. These perspectives serve as analytical frameworks rather than grounds for equating seventh-century Medina with the modern state. The social contract perspectives of Locke (1988) and Rousseau (2002) help compare the historical agreement embodied in the Charter with theories of state legitimacy. The analysis can also draw on Weber's (1978) account of social order and legitimacy, Black's (2011) work on the history of Islamic political thought, and Al-Mawardi's (2000) discussion of governance doctrines. Through historical and comparative analysis, Pulungan (1996) emphasizes the principles of equality and freedom without claiming that the Qur'an or the Medina Charter prescribes a particular form of government. These perspectives provide analytical tools for examining the document's meaning without disregarding its historical distinctiveness.

Table 1. Thematic categorization of the 47 clauses of the Medina Charter

Regulatory theme	**Clauses**	**Main provisions**
Community formation and social solidarity	1–11	Formation of the *ummah*; tribal responsibilities; payment of *diyāt*; release of captives; and solidarity with members of the community.
Political solidarity, protection, and the administration of justice	12–23	Arrangements concerning alliances; rejection of injustice; mutual protection among believers; shared security responsibilities; law enforcement; and dispute resolution.
Intercommunal relations and recognition of religious diversity	24–35	Relations between Muslims and Jews; recognition of religious identities; contributions to defense; and the rights and obligations of Jewish communities and their allies.
Authority, responsibility, and guarantees of protection	36–42	The authority of Muhammad; individual and collective responsibilities; defense cooperation; territorial security; guarantees of protection; and conflict resolution.

Territorial security, external relations, and peace	43–47	Prohibition against granting protection to parties hostile to Medina; collective defense; peace agreements; and the concluding provisions of the pact.

Source: Compiled from the Medina Charter (622/1975) and Hamidullah (1975).

The thematic mapping in Table 1 shows that the 47 clauses comprise five interrelated groups of provisions. Clauses 1–11 concern community formation and social solidarity; Clauses 12–23 regulate political solidarity, protection, and the resolution of disputes; and Clauses 24–35 govern relations between Muslims and Jewish communities and their allies. Clauses 36–42 address authority, responsibility, and guarantees of protection, while Clauses 43–47 emphasize territorial security, external relations, and peace. This categorization represents the authors' thematic analysis rather than an official division contained in the original text. It helps identify the relationships among provisions governing individuals, groups, and collective interests. Since some clauses overlap in substance, the categories serve as an analytical aid rather than a rigid separation of meaning. Accordingly, each clause must be read in relation to the others to avoid interpreting the social and political order established by the document in isolation.

One principle reflected in the Medina Charter is the formation of a unified community through the concept of the *ummah*. Clause 1 identifies the Muslims from Quraysh and Yathrib, together with those who follow them, as one community. Clause 25 subsequently addresses the Jews of Banū ʿAwf while recognizing the religious identity of each community. These provisions demonstrate an effort to establish a shared bond without erasing religious identities. However, the scope of membership must be interpreted carefully. Lecker (2004) questions the assumption that all Jewish tribes of Medina were included in the same document and highlights the security guarantees afforded to groups that were parties to the agreement. Mohd. Hisham Mohd Kamal (2025) identifies the principles of *ummah*, territorial integrity, consultation (*shūrā*), the right to life, equality, and freedom of religion, while also noting that the Charter does not encompass all constitutional principles found in the Qur'an. This finding underscores the need to distinguish the provisions of the document itself from norms developed in other Islamic sources.

Relations between communities in the Medina Charter have also been examined through the issues of pluralism and religious freedom. Amril and Maksum (2025) identify elements of minority protection, human rights, and legal equality in the document. Pasaribu and Yusrianto (2025) highlight freedom of religion, justice, solidarity, and consultation as principles associated with religious moderation. Patamatta and Jumardi (2020) draw on the Charter to discuss the concept of the rule of law in Indonesia. More specifically, Fadhlurrahman et al. (2026) compare the Medina Charter with the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia from the perspective of *siyāsah dustūriyyah* and identify similarities in their recognition of

religious freedom. Meanwhile, a study by Badan Pembinaan Hukum Nasional (2011) on interreligious harmony provides an Indonesian legal and social context, although it does not specifically examine the Medina Charter. These studies demonstrate the document's relevance to discussions of plural societies, particularly where the recognition of differences is accompanied by the regulation of rights and shared responsibilities.

The Medina Charter also regulates dispute resolution as part of maintaining collective order. Clauses 23 and 42 stipulate that disputes likely to cause disorder are to be referred to God and Muhammad. These provisions indicate the existence of an authority for resolving conflicts that supersedes the separate interests of individual groups. Dicey (1959) explains the supremacy of law as a principle under which power is exercised in accordance with the law and everyone is subject to the applicable rules. Tarigan (2025) identifies clarity of rules, consistent enforcement, judicial independence, transparency, and equal treatment as essential elements of a just state governed by the rule of law. Both perspectives can serve as comparative analytical frameworks, but they do not establish that Medina's political structure was identical to that of a modern state. Al-Mawardi's (2000) thought also provides a doctrinal context for understanding authority and the administration of Islamic governance. Thus, the Medina Charter connects agreement, responsibility, protection, and dispute resolution as elements that shaped the social and political order of the community at the time.

Governance and sociopolitical dynamics of Medina

Yathrib before the Hijrah was neither socially homogeneous nor entirely devoid of rules. This oasis region was inhabited by Arab groups, particularly Aws and Khazraj, as well as Jewish communities such as Banū Qaynuqāʿ, Banū al-Naḍīr, and Banū Qurayẓah. Kelpetin (2017) demonstrates that geographical conditions, settlement patterns, and population composition are essential factors in understanding Yathrib society before the Prophet's arrival. However, this diversity did not automatically produce a stable political unity. Lecker (1997) explains that intergroup relations were shaped by alliances and agreements that could change over time, while rivalries between Aws and Khazraj culminated in the Battle of Buʿāth around 617 CE. These rivalries also disrupted access to land and water, as well as the security of agricultural activities. Therefore, pre-Hijrah Yathrib is better understood as a society governed by local arrangements and fragile alliances rather than as a community entirely without legal order.

The Hijrah of Prophet Muhammad transformed the sociopolitical relations of Yathrib. The *Muhājirūn* and *Anṣār* were brought together into a new community, while relations with Jewish groups and local allies were regulated through agreements. Arjomand (2009) interprets the Medina Charter as a composite document consisting

of three parts, formulated over the period from 622 to 627 CE, rather than as a single text completed in one event. He argues that the initial section established a political community and transferred responsibility for resolving murder cases from individual clans to the wider community, while subsequent sections regulated the religious freedom of Jewish allies and the defense of Medina. Rose (2011) also recommends cross-referencing the *sīrah*, the Qurʾān, and the *Kitāb* to identify the document's historical core. These findings indicate that governance in Medina emerged through a gradual political process. Thus, the Hijrah marked a transformation in leadership patterns and social solidarity.

In administrative practice, governance in Medina demonstrated a division of responsibilities based on expertise and trust, although it should not be equated with modern bureaucracy. Abu Dawud (n.d., Hadith 3645) reports that Zayd ibn Thābit learned the script of the Jewish community so that he could write the Prophet's letters and read incoming correspondence. Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj (n.d., Hadith 1783a) also records that ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib wrote the Treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyyah. At the provincial level, Elidrissi et al. (2026) examine reports concerning the appointment of officials during the Prophet's lifetime in Medina, Mecca, Ṭāʾif, Yemen, Bahrain, and Oman. Their study indicates that administrative and religious responsibilities were delegated across an expanding territory, although the authority of these officials remained closely connected to the Prophet as the central leader. Such appointments are therefore better understood as task-based delegation rather than as a separation of powers.

The management of public wealth was an important element in supporting the needs of society and the government of Medina. Miftahurrahmah and Hidayat (2024) describe the collection and distribution of *zakāh*, *ṣadaqah*, *ghanīmah*, and *fayʾ* as mechanisms for reducing inequality and supporting collective interests. However, the classification of public revenues must take historical chronology into account. Mohd. Muchsin and Manan (2019) explain that *jizyah* was already implemented during the Prophet's lifetime, whereas *kharāj*, as a land-tax system, developed during the caliphate of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Therefore, *kharāj* should not be treated as an established instrument of the Prophet's administration. The term *Bayt al-Māl* in discussions of this period should be understood in terms of the functions of public wealth management, without assuming the existence of a permanent treasury institution with a bureaucratic structure comparable to that of later periods. Sources of revenue and their purposes must be distinguished according to their legal basis, type of wealth, and historical period. The various revenue sources and their management orientations during the early period of Islamic governance are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Revenue instruments and public wealth management in the early period of Islamic governance

Instrument	Revenue source	Management orientation	Historical context
Zakāh	Financial obligations imposed on Muslims who meet the conditions prescribed by Islamic law.	Distribution to eligible recipient groups (*mustaḥiqūn*).	Implemented during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad.
Ṣadaqah	Voluntary donations and other forms of giving prescribed by Islamic law.	Meeting community needs and supporting vulnerable groups.	Practiced during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad.
Jizyah	Obligations imposed on non-Muslim groups in accordance with applicable provisions and agreements.	Public revenue and the fulfillment of obligations within political relations.	Implemented during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad.
Ghanīmah	Wealth acquired through warfare.	Distribution in accordance with Islamic legal provisions.	Implemented during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad.
Fayʾ	Wealth acquired without direct armed conflict.	Management for purposes prescribed by Islamic law.	Recognized during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad.
Kharāj	Revenue derived from the control or management of land.	Fiscal revenue and financing for public interests.	Developed as a land-tax system during the caliphate of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.

Source: Compiled from Miftahurrahmah and Hidayat (2024), Mohd. Muchsin and Manan (2019), and Al-Mawardi (2000).

Medina's economic policies were not limited to public revenue collection but also encompassed the regulation of market activities. Bukhari and Gondal (2021) explain that the Prophet developed the economic foundations of the community through a market that enabled commercial activities to operate according to principles grounded in Islamic teachings. The practice of market supervision is illustrated in a report in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, in which the Prophet inspected a pile of food and reprimanded a merchant who had concealed its wet portion, thereby preventing buyers from receiving accurate information (Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, n.d., Hadith 102). Mukhtar and Khusnudin (2024) interpret this practice as a foundation for the ethics of market supervision, while Mujahidin (2005) explains that the function of *ḥisbah* developed into a more institutionalized supervisory office in later periods. Accordingly, market supervision during the Prophet's lifetime must be distinguished from the *ḥisbah* institution that developed subsequently. This form of oversight does not, by itself, establish the existence of a fully institutionalized *ḥisbah* office during the Prophet's lifetime.

In judicial affairs, the Prophet's authority served as the primary point of reference for resolving disputes involving the people of Medina. Arjomand (2009) argues that the Medina Charter transferred certain legal responsibilities, particularly in cases of murder, from kinship groups to the broader political community. He also identifies guarantees of religious freedom for Jewish allies. Rose (2011), by contrast, emphasizes that the text should be understood as a series of agreements that may have been formulated at different times. Consequently, legal relations among different communities cannot be simplified into a single, uniform judicial system. The Medina Charter supports an interpretation of the regulation of plural relations and the establishment of dispute-resolution authority, but it does not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that Jewish communities possessed fully independent private judicial institutions. This distinction is important to prevent the concept of legal pluralism from being imposed anachronistically on historical sources.

The principle of justice in the Prophet's judicial practices is evident in his rejection of preferential treatment based on social status. In the case of a woman from Banū Makhzūm, the Prophet rejected the intercession of Usāmah ibn Zayd and declared: "Those before you were destroyed because when a person of high standing among them stole, they let that person go, but when a person of lower status stole, they enforced the punishment. By Allah, if Fāṭimah, the daughter of Muḥammad, were to steal, I would cut off her hand myself" (Al-Mubarakfuri, 2008). This declaration demonstrates that social status must not exempt anyone from legal accountability. The principle of caution in criminal punishment is also expressed in the following maxim: "Refrain from imposing criminal penalties when doubts (*shubuhāt*) arise, for a judge's error in granting a pardon is preferable to an error in imposing punishment" (Al-Mawardi, 2000). Both statements emphasize the importance of justice and caution in judicial practice.

The relevance of the Medina Charter's principles to contemporary Indonesian governance

The Medina Charter can be understood as a political agreement regulating coexistence among communities with different religious and tribal backgrounds, rather than merely as a religious document. The mapping of its 47 clauses in this study reveals principles concerning political community formation, recognition of diversity, protection, justice, solidarity, security, and dispute resolution (Hamidullah, 1975). These principles remain relevant to contemporary governance because they address fundamental questions: whom does the state protect, how is authority exercised, and how are common interests established? However, their relevance does not imply that the institutions of seventh-century Medina should be replicated in the modern state. Their social contexts, political structures, and legal systems are different. Therefore, the Medina Charter is better understood as a source of normative inspiration and a

critical framework for evaluating whether modern governments genuinely uphold rights, justice, and public responsibility. Its principles can thus be examined in light of contemporary social developments.

The principle of recognizing diversity in the Medina Charter, particularly its provisions concerning Jewish communities, can be compared with the guarantees of religious freedom under Articles 28E and 29 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Law No. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights, and Presidential Regulation No. 58 of 2023 on Strengthening Religious Moderation. Although this normative framework is in place, its implementation continues to face challenges. The 2025 Religious Harmony Index reached 77.89, with scores of 88.82 for tolerance, 79.35 for equality, and 65.49 for togetherness (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2025). The disparity among these dimensions indicates that acceptance of differences has not yet fully translated into equal cooperation. Andhita et al. (2026) reveal how bureaucratic discretion and administrative requirements can restrict minority groups in establishing houses of worship. The 2026 report by Komisi Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia also documents similar barriers (2026), while Muhtada et al. (2022) demonstrate that the religious freedom of Shi'a refugees in Sampang remains unfulfilled. Thus, pluralism must be realized through tangible protection rather than remaining a matter of formal recognition.

Equality before the law is another principle reflected in the Medina Charter's provisions concerning the protection of life, the administration of justice, and dispute resolution. In Indonesia, this principle is guaranteed under Article 27(1) and Article 28D(1) of the 1945 Constitution, as well as Law No. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights. Justice cannot be measured solely by the equal status of individuals before the law; people must also have meaningful access to judicial processes. The 2025 Annual Report of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia records 22,748 cases receiving *prodeo* (fee-exemption) services, 40,057 cases handled through hearings outside courthouse premises, and 312,358 recipients of Legal Aid Post (Posbakum) services (Mahkamah Agung Republik Indonesia, 2026). These achievements have expanded access to justice, but they do not establish that judicial outcomes are already equitable. The remaining challenge is to ensure the quality of legal assistance, judicial independence, and equal protection for vulnerable groups.

The Medina Charter places security and peace within the realm of collective responsibility rather than treating them solely as matters for those in power. This principle is consistent with Law No. 7 of 2012 on Social Conflict Management, which regulates conflict prevention, cessation, and post-conflict recovery while providing opportunities for public participation. However, the success of conflict management cannot be measured merely by the cessation of violence or the restoration of public order. Through interviews with actors involved in the Sunni-Shi'a conflict, Fahadayna

et al. (2026) demonstrate that clientelism and political brokerage by government institutions and religious actors significantly influence conflict-resolution outcomes. Muhtada et al. (2022) also show that Shi'a refugees in Sampang continue to face barriers to returning to their homes and exercising their religious freedom. These findings emphasize that peace without the restoration of victims' rights and trust produces only fragile stability. The state must therefore prioritize just reconciliation rather than merely containing tensions.

The principle of solidarity in the Medina Charter also requires attention to vulnerable groups through social responsibility and the distribution of resources. In Indonesia, one of the instruments for realizing this principle is zakat management under Law No. 23 of 2011, alongside the state financial system regulated by Law No. 17 of 2003. The National Board of Zakat reported that the collection of zakat, infaq, sadaqah, and other religious social funds (ZIS-DSKL) reached IDR 44.698 trillion in 2025, while distribution and utilization amounted to IDR 44.268 trillion through 748 zakat management organizations (Badan Amil Zakat Nasional, 2026). These aggregate figures demonstrate the substantial capacity of religious social funds, but they do not automatically establish poverty reduction or equitable distribution of benefits. Herianingrum et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of empowerment programs that consider the priorities and potential of eligible zakat beneficiaries. Meanwhile, Ninglasari et al. (2023) highlight the role of amil governance and distribution efficiency. Accordingly, distributive justice requires accurate targeting, transparency, and systematic impact evaluation.

The concept of *amānah* in the Medina Charter can be understood as an obligation on those exercising authority to act responsibly and prioritize the public interest. In Indonesia, financial accountability is regulated under Articles 23 and 23E of the 1945 Constitution and Law No. 17 of 2003, while institutional oversight of integrity and public services is carried out, among others, by Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (KPK) and Ombudsman Republik Indonesia. Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (2025) reported a national score of 72.32 in its Integrity Assessment Survey, placing Indonesia in the category of vulnerable to corruption. Ombudsman Republik Indonesia (2026) received 23,596 public complaints throughout 2025; the most frequently reported forms of maladministration were failure to provide services (40.68%), protracted delays (21.25%), and procedural deviations (18.79%). Through a qualitative study conducted in Banyumas, Srirejeki and Khairurrizqo (2025) demonstrate that community engagement can strengthen transparency and social oversight. These findings confirm that accountability must be demonstrated through effective oversight and measurable improvements in public services.

Overall, the Medina Charter remains relevant as a source of principles for governance, particularly in recognizing diversity, protecting rights, promoting justice,

strengthening social solidarity, advancing social welfare, and ensuring accountability in the exercise of power. However, this relevance is normative and critical in nature, rather than a claim of direct historical origins between the Medina Charter and Indonesian legislation. Data on religious harmony, access to justice, zakat management, institutional integrity, and public service complaints reveal two simultaneous realities: institutional mechanisms have been established, yet significant gaps in implementation remain. Therefore, the success of governance should not be measured merely by the number of regulations or programs in place, but by the ability to guarantee equal rights, resolve conflicts fairly, distribute benefits equitably, and ensure accountability in the exercise of authority. The Medina Charter is not a blueprint to be replicated literally. Its principal value lies in its ethical and political principles, which can be used to evaluate governance practices and demand greater public accountability from the state.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Medina Charter functioned not only as an agreement regulating relations among different social groups but also as a document embodying fundamental principles of governance, including political community formation, recognition of diversity, legal protection, social solidarity, collective security, and dispute resolution. These principles emerged in response to Medina's sociopolitical conditions, which were characterized by diverse communities and the need to establish a shared social order. The findings underscore that the significance of the Medina Charter lies in its ability to connect political authority with social responsibility and the protection of society. In the Indonesian context, these principles can be translated into guarantees of religious freedom, equality before the law, equitable conflict management, social welfare distribution, and government accountability. Nevertheless, contemporary evidence indicates that the existence of regulations and institutions does not necessarily guarantee the effective implementation of these principles. Accordingly, the relevance of the Medina Charter lies not in replicating its historical system of governance, but in drawing on its ethical and political values as a basis for evaluating and improving the quality of governance in Indonesia.

This study contributes to expanding scholarship on the Medina Charter beyond historical and normative interpretations toward an analysis of governance, while connecting its historical principles with Indonesian legislation and contemporary empirical issues. Nevertheless, the study has limitations because it relies on library research and secondary data, and therefore does not directly capture community experiences or the implementation of policies at the local level. Furthermore, the classification of the Charter's clauses and the interpretation of their contemporary relevance constitute analytical constructions that remain open to different historical

and textual interpretations. Future research should therefore undertake empirical investigations of specific government institutions or communities to examine the application of these principles more concretely. Further studies could also deepen the comparison between the Medina Charter and the Indonesian Constitution, particularly regarding minority protection, legal justice, conflict resolution, and public accountability. Such efforts are essential to ensure that the Medina Charter is not merely preserved as a historical legacy but continues to be critically examined as a source of political thought and governance principles.

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