# Contested Moral and Political Authority on Instagram: Religious and State Actors' Framing of Palestinian Humanitarian Narratives

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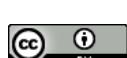| **Abstract** | This study examines the growing competition between religious and state actors in framing Palestinian humanitarian issues on Instagram. Previous studies on Palestinian digital activism on Instagram have generally emphasized emotional solidarity and content amplification but have failed to account for how religious and state actors directly compete for moral and political authority within the same platform space. Addressing this gap, this study aims to identify how these actors construct and contest narrative frames and how users negotiate meaning through their engagement patterns. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through analysis of high-engagement posts, semi-structured interviews with religious and institutional content producers, and documentation of digital footprints, which were analyzed through pattern matching within the frameworks of digital authority and moral legitimacy. Findings indicate that religious actors construct humanitarian narratives based on moral-emotional appeals and religious obligation, while state actors emphasize diplomacy, legality, and political stability. Public responses demonstrate selective alignment and open competition, which reinforce non-state narratives through heightened emotional engagement. This study enhances the comprehension of religion-state relations in digital environments by illustrating that legitimacy is not exclusively generated by formal institutions but is actively negotiated through narrative interactions, public sentiments, and platform visibility. In doing so, this research goes beyond previous studies of digital activism by positioning Instagram as an arena for contested moral and political authority, rather than simply a medium for mobilizing human solidarity. |
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| **Keywords** | Discourse contestation; Instagram; Palestinian humanitarian issues; religious narratives; state narratives; public response |

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The contestation of discourse between religion and state on humanitarian issues has become increasingly visible in the era of social media (Abdel-Fadil 2019; Weninggalih and Pramiyanti 2025). In Indonesia, religious values often grounded in Qur'anic moral reasoning frequently shape how religious leaders interpret and respond to state policies. Social media amplifies this dynamic by providing a space in which various actors construct narratives, mobilize support, and influence public opinion. While the state tends to frame humanitarian issues through diplomacy and political stability, religious actors highlight spiritual solidarity and collective identity. This tension illustrates how humanitarian discourse

becomes an arena for negotiating moral legitimacy in the digital public sphere (Lomachinska 2025; Oka Widana 2024). Despite these developments, scholarly work has yet to clearly explain how such contestation is shaped by platform-specific features, particularly Instagram's visual affordances, affect-driven engagement, and algorithmic amplification.

The Palestinian issue provides a relevant analytical lens because it encompasses political, religious, identity, and transnational solidarity dimensions. On Instagram, the discourse emerges through diverse narratives disseminated by religious leaders, humanitarian activists, and state officials. Religious figures organize solidarity through communal prayers, philanthropy, and calls for boycott, while government institutions respond through diplomacy and cautious political messaging. These differing approaches converge on Instagram, turning it into a site where competing claims to authority are negotiated. Public engagement, especially among younger users, further shapes these dynamics, as audiences not only consume information but also reproduce content, contest narratives, and co-construct public opinion.

Initial observations of accounts such as @mhuseingazaofficial and @bang_onim show how visual storytelling and religious–humanitarian framing attract wide public attention, while accounts like @Permadiaktivis2 present counter-narratives that diverge from both dominant religious and state positions. These variations highlight Instagram's function as a fragmented discursive arena rather than a unified public sphere. At the same time, freedom of expression on the platform is mediated by state regulation, including the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE), which shapes what kinds of critique and information circulation are permissible. Public heterogeneity intersects with these regulatory constraints, creating a contested environment where religious and state discourses continuously overlap and diverge.

A number of previous studies have discussed the role of Instagram in Palestinian digital activism, including how visualizations of suffering evoke solidarity, how hashtags mobilize transnational action, and how algorithms contribute to the polarization of discourse (Arrafi and Surur 2024; Nurfaedah, Mustikasari, and Sehabudin 2025; Putra 2025; Rahayu, Susilowati, and Huzaeny 2025; Wiyani et al. 2025). Other studies reveal how certain groups exploit the Palestinian issue for ideological propaganda (Ikhwan and Falah, 2024), while state actors such as UNRWA use Instagram to frame the humanitarian crisis through visual appeals to vulnerability and aid (Moharam, 2025). Furthermore, Instagram is recognized as a medium for global digital activism that emphasizes suffering, human rights, and resistance (Satkhed, Thaloor, and Indrakanti, 2025). However, these studies have not examined how religious and state narratives directly compete for moral and political authority within the same platform environment, nor how algorithmic systems mediate this competition. Rather, most of these studies tend to be descriptive and focus on activism as a practice, without adequately explaining the interactions and competitions between religious and state actors in producing narrative authority. In other words, the existing literature focuses more on examining "how activism occurs" than on "how religious and state legitimacy are contested within the same platform space."

Furthermore, these studies rarely position the state and religion as actors confronting each other discursively. The state often appears as a policy setting or regulatory context, while religion is understood as a source of identity and solidarity. As a result, the mechanisms of competing moral and institutional authority, particularly how the public evaluates, supports, or rejects the claims of these two actors, have not been systematically analyzed. Yet, in platform-based environments, legitimacy is determined not only by formal status but also by visibility, emotional resonance, and audience engagement.

Departing from this gap, this article specifically analyzes how religious and state actors compete in framing the Palestinian humanitarian issue on Instagram, as well as how the public negotiates these competing claims of authority. By identifying narrative structures, content strategies, and patterns of public engagement, this study contributes to academic discussions on digital religion, political communication, and platform-based humanitarianism. Different from previous research that positions Instagram as a medium of activism, this study positions the platform as an arena for religion-state contestation, where moral and institutional authority are simultaneously produced, questioned, and negotiated.

Thus, this article's primary contribution is not merely mapping forms of digital solidarity but rather developing an analytical understanding of how the relationship between religion and the state is reconfigured in the digital public sphere. By highlighting the tension between religious moral authority and state institutional authority within the Instagram ecosystem, this research broadens the discussion on digital religion and political communication, particularly in the context of global humanitarian issues that are fraught with emotion and ideological interests.

## 2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to analyze the narrative contestation between religious and state actors in framing the Palestinian humanitarian issue on Instagram. The case study design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex and contextual social processes, particularly how religious moral authority and state institutional authority are negotiated in the platform-mediated digital public space. The research focus is limited to the Indonesian context, given the strong position of religion in social life and the prominent role of the state in diplomacy on the Palestinian issue, thus providing a relevant analytical context for examining religion-state relations in the digital space (R. Yin 2017).

Case selection was conducted purposively based on analytical relevance, not solely on account popularity. The Instagram accounts analyzed were chosen because they consistently produce narratives about Palestinian humanitarian issues and occupy distinct discursive positions within public discourse. Key considerations included the accounts' ability to represent religious perspectives or critique the state, their role as discursive references for Indonesian audiences, and the presence of public interactions that allow for analysis of the negotiation of meaning and legitimacy. Based on these considerations, accounts such as @mhuseingazaofficial, @bang_onim, and @Permadiaktivis2 were chosen because they each display distinct patterns of narrative articulation ranging from religiously nuanced field documentation to popular humanitarian advocacy to polemical critiques of state actors, thus allowing for analytical comparisons of how religious moral authority is produced and contested with the institutional authority of the state within the same platform environment.

Research data was collected from three primary sources. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six informants: active religious content producers on Instagram, academics researching religion and digital media, and observers of political and digital communication. Informants were selected based on their expertise, professional involvement, and reflective capacity in understanding religion-state dynamics in the digital space. Second, systematic observation of Instagram content, including posts, visuals, captions, hashtags, and user comments, was conducted, prioritizing content that garnered high engagement during periods of heightened public attention to the Palestinian issue. Third, digital footprint documentation in the form of screenshots and archived posts was used to support thematic analysis and data triangulation. Furthermore, secondary data such as scientific

publications, media reports, and relevant regulations served as interpretive context, rather than as the primary object of analysis.

Data analysis followed the case study strategy proposed by Yin, emphasizing pattern matching and explanation building. Interview and observation data were coded thematically using NVivo software through stages of open coding to identify initial themes, axial coding to group themes into key analytical categories such as religious moral authority, state institutional authority, and public response, and selective coding to formulate interpretive relationships between these categories. Interview data played a crucial role in shaping analytical categories, particularly in explaining how actors understand legitimacy, the role of the state, and the position of religion in digital communication, and were used to contextualize patterns emerging from the analysis of Instagram content (Al Yahmady and Al Abri 2013). This study consciously avoids causal or technical claims regarding Instagram's algorithm; any discussion of content visibility or exposure trends is treated as observations based on user perceptions and participant experiences, rather than as the result of algorithmic measurements.

To enhance credibility, the validity of the study was strengthened through triangulation of data sources between interviews, content observations, and digital documentation, as well as through limited checks with informants to confirm initial interpretations. However, this study has several methodological limitations. The study did not use computational methods or large-scale data analysis, making it impossible to technically measure the influence of platform algorithms. Furthermore, the focus on a case study limits the generalizability of the findings to other platforms or national contexts, and the analysis was based on public content, thus excluding the dynamics of private communication. Acknowledging these limitations is intended to increase transparency and strengthen the research's credibility, while also opening up opportunities for further research that combines qualitative approaches with computational or cross-platform comparative methods.

## 3.    FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 *Instagram as a Space for Narrative Contestation*

Instagram has become a central arena for discursive contestation among religious, state, and civil society actors in framing the Palestinian humanitarian issue. Through accounts such as @mhuseingazaofficial, @bang_onim, and @Permadiaktivis2, social media is utilized as a space to construct, disseminate, and amplify alternative narratives that are often overlooked by mainstream media. The diverse communication strategies, delivery styles, and moral–political orientations displayed through these accounts illustrate how the Palestinian issue is simultaneously framed as a global humanitarian crisis and a marker of religious identity.

The account @mhuseingazaofficial, managed by Palestinian journalists and activists in the Gaza Strip, provides an authentic and firsthand perspective from the conflict zone. Its content depictions of military attacks, health conditions, children's lives, and the spiritual atmosphere of Gazan society create a strong and emotionally resonant humanitarian narrative. The insertion of Quranic verses as introductions or reinforcement of messages functions as a spiritual framing strategy, connecting the Palestinian struggle with religious moral imperatives while positioning the account as a digital front line of social advocacy. Thus, @mhuseingazaofficial serves as a form of digital resistance, expressing disappointment toward inadequate international responses and fostering cross-border solidarity.

Meanwhile, @bang_onim stands out through visual documentation of refugee conditions, field updates, and consistent donation appeals, thereby influencing Indonesian public opinion. With more than one million followers, the humanitarian narrative it constructs is emotional, personal, and

religious, reflecting the strong emotional affinity of Indonesian Muslims with the Palestinian people. The account's consistent activity has made it a primary reference point for the Indonesian public in understanding ongoing developments and participating in solidarity initiatives.

In contrast, @Permadiaktivis2 adopts a provocative, assertive, and openly critical communication style. This account strongly supports the Palestinian cause while criticizing actors perceived as indecisive, including Arab governments and international institutions. Religion is positioned as a source of moral legitimacy, whereas the state is often portrayed as overly diplomatic, passive, or negligent. This sharp communication pattern evokes diverse public reactions, generating polarized debates within the digital sphere. Consequently, the Palestinian issue on Instagram not only fosters solidarity but also stimulates complex ideological contestations.

### 3.2 *How Islamic Figures or Organizations Respond to the Humanitarian Issue of Palestine In The Contestation of Religion and State on Instagram*

Islamic figures and organizations respond to the Palestinian humanitarian issue on Instagram through communication strategies that emphasize moral legitimacy and humanitarian urgency. Accounts such as @mhuseingazaofficial display a response pattern based on field documentation that combines visual evidence such as images of children, health services, and refugee conditions with religious framing, often beginning narratives with Quranic verses. This combination serves a dual function: (1) it reinforces narrative authority by presenting information from an "authentic" local source (journalists/activists in Gaza), and (2) it frames the issue as a moral obligation for the Muslim community, thus strengthening emotional resonance and collective solidarity.

In the Indonesian context, @bang_onim illustrates how local figures and volunteers with substantial follower bases (1.2 million) extend the reach of humanitarian messages through regular updates, donation campaigns, and emotionally charged personal narratives. This popularity shifts the source of legitimacy from formal institutions to digital public figures, with religion functioning as a normative foundation for collective action. Meanwhile, @Permadiaktivis2 adopts a more polemical style: religious arguments are mobilized to criticize the perceived shortcomings of state actors and international institutions, placing the state in a position of moral delegitimization within the discourse.

Strategically, religious actors exhibit three prominent tactics: visualizing suffering to evoke empathy, employing religious framing to confer normative authority, and mobilizing collective action through donations, boycotts, and hashtag campaigns. The relationship between religion and the state in these displays reflects not mere coexistence but an ongoing struggle for legitimacy: religion projects a more urgent moral voice, while the state is portrayed (within this discourse) as slow, diplomatic, or insufficiently responsive.

### 3.3 *Public Response to the Contestation Between Religion and State in the Palestinian Humanitarian Issue on Instagram*

Public response to the three focal accounts was active and varied, indicating that audiences did not receive the narratives uniformly. User interactions such as likes, empathetic comments, and reposting to Instagram Stories show a pattern of support for humanitarian messages, particularly those framed through religious moral appeals. These responses reflect how users internalized and reproduced the narrative emphasis on suffering, solidarity, and moral obligation. Re-sharing activities contributed to expanding the circulation of content about victims and humanitarian needs, thereby strengthening informal networks of solidarity.

Comments on the posts reveal a spectrum of opinions. A majority expressed agreement with religiously framed calls for solidarity and immediate action, while a smaller portion of users emphasized caution by referencing procedural or diplomatic considerations more commonly associated with state approaches (e.g., mechanisms of aid distribution or issues of international relations). These patterns demonstrate opinion fragmentation aligned with the narrative contestation between religious and state discourses.

Observation of users' feed patterns suggests that repeated interaction with certain themes tends to expose users to similar content, although this is based on user-reported experiences rather than technical measurement. Some users reported decreased visibility of particular posts (often described as shadow banning), which shaped their perceptions of the platform's neutrality. These perceptions, although unverifiable through this study, contributed to the emergence of narratives about content filtering and encouraged some users to shift to alternative accounts, different platforms, or the use of other hashtags. From a sociopolitical perspective, public response becomes a visible indicator of perceived legitimacy. High engagement with humanitarian-religious narratives strengthens the social legitimacy of those narratives, while critical comments directed toward state actors signal a perceived gap between public expectations and official policy responses. However, the rapid circulation of emotionally charged content also carries the risk of limited verification, creating potential for misinformation and reinforcing polarization within the digital sphere.

### 3.4 *The Dissemination of Information About the Palestinian Conflict on Instagram in Shaping Public Discourse and Messages Related to the Contestation Between Religion and State.*

The dissemination of information about Palestine on Instagram occurs through three interrelated processes: (1) content production by actors such as religious figures, volunteers, local journalists, and state institutions; (2) platform features, including captions, hashtags, and sharing tools; and (3) public reception through engagement, interpretation, and content reproduction. Accounts such as @mhuseingazaofficial and @bang_onim consistently employ religious captions, hashtags, and visual documentation to construct a humanitarian frame centered on victims. This framing contrasts with state-generated messages where available, which tend to emphasize diplomatic statements, legality, and procedural clarity.

Hashtags such as #BoycottIsrael function as hubs that cluster related content, enabling users to follow and contribute to shared narratives. However, hashtag use also shows variation and shifts, particularly when users perceive changes in content distribution or when platform policies influence post visibility. In this context, hashtags serve not only as markers of solidarity but also as sites of narrative negotiation. User engagement patterns indicate that visually strong and emotionally resonant posts tend to attract higher interaction rates. This suggests that presentation style influences how widely a message is circulated, although the study does not claim direct causal effects from platform algorithms. Rather, the findings highlight how the visual-emotional format employed by non-state actors is more easily processed and reproduced by the public compared to more technical diplomatic messages.

The dissemination process shapes public discourse in two observable ways. First, agenda setting occurs as non-state actors with large followings place the Palestinian humanitarian issue prominently within online discussions, influencing perceptions of urgency. Second, framing effects arise from stylistic choices such as emotional imagery, Quranic verses, and explicit calls for solidarity, which guide public interpretation toward viewing the conflict primarily as a humanitarian and moral issue. This

interpretive direction often positions state narratives reactively, especially when official statements are perceived as slower or more procedural.

At the same time, the findings indicate that not all circulating information is verified, meaning that narrative legitimacy must be considered alongside factual validity. The credibility of Gaza-based accounts strengthens local authority, yet the potential for over-framing or selective emphasis on certain aspects of the conflict remains. In sum, Instagram operates as both a technical and social arena in which religious and state discourses are produced, accessed, and contested. The platform enables a dynamic digital public sphere where moral legitimacy, message visibility, and audience participation intersect and sometimes conflict.

***Discussion***

Instagram has become a central arena in which religious, state, and civil society actors construct and negotiate the humanitarian narrative of Palestine. Rather than merely functioning as a distribution channel, Instagram facilitates a contested field of meaning-making, where actors frame the conflict through visual, emotional, and religious vocabularies that shape how publics interpret the crisis. Previous studies similarly underline how humanitarian and religious framings dominate digital discourse, while political and diplomatic framings struggle to gain comparable visibility (Abu-Ayyash 2024; Alsharairi et al. 2025; Ramamurthy 2016). Religious hashtags and captions serve as tools for aggregating solidarity and triggering fragmentation when platforms intervene (Hidayat and Amin 2024).

*1. Humanitarian–Religious Framing and the Mediatization of Religion*

The findings show that accounts such as @mhuseingazaofficial, @bang_onim, and @Permadiaktivis2 employ a humanitarian-religious framing characterized by emotional visuals, eyewitness documentation, and religious verses. Rather than treating Palestine as solely geopolitical, these actors frame it as a moral obligation of the global Muslim community. This aligns with mediatization theory, which explains how digital platforms reshape religious authority and expand its legitimacy beyond institutional settings (Kurniawan 2025; Zaid et al. 2022). Importantly, the findings do not indicate a deterministic algorithmic advantage for religious content; instead, the dominance of humanitarian-religious framing emerges from its high affective resonance and ease of reproduction by users. This clarifies that platform affordances facilitate but do not cause visibility patterns. Some organizations position themselves critically toward state ambiguity, while others integrate state statements to maintain balance. This divergence exemplifies how digital platforms open a multi-layered contestation space where religious authority can support, negotiate, or challenge state diplomacy (Dessy Kushardiyanti, Amalia, and Novy Khusnul Khotimah 2025; Ikhwan and Falah 2024; Zaid et al. 2022).

*2. Public Response: Affective Publics and Participatory Culture*

Public responses demonstrate that audiences are not passive recipients; they actively participate in shaping discourse. Through likes, comments, hashtags, and reposting, users form what Papacharissi terms affective publics, where emotions circulate as political expressions. Findings show: Strong support for humanitarian-religious narratives; moderate support for procedural diplomatic narratives; and critical responses toward both state and religious actors.

These patterns reveal interpretive diversity, not uniform alignment. Users reinforce solidarity through emotional comments, digital donations, and participation in online campaigns (Abu-Ayyash 2024; Alsharairi et al. 2025). Some users reported decreased visibility of certain posts ("shadow

banning"), yet these perceptions cannot be verified empirically in this study. Even so, such perceptions contribute to narratives of content suppression, influencing migration to alternative accounts or hashtags. These dynamics confirm prior studies on fragmentation and the risks of affect-driven mobilization (Cervi and Divon 2023; Lina Yuniati and Tutiasri 2025; Nasereddin 2023).

3. *Information Dissemination, Agenda-Setting, and Narrative Competition*

Information about Palestine circulates through religious figures, humanitarian organizations, socio-political influencers, and alternative media. These actors disseminate situational videos, infographics, and moral appeals that shape what Instagram users perceive as urgent. Rather than claiming direct causal effects, the findings indicate that agenda prominence emerges from recurrent posting frequency, emotional and visual intensity, narrative coherence, and user-driven amplification. This is consistent with studies showing that emotional and morally framed content tends to receive wider audience reproduction, giving it higher agenda-setting potential (Satkhed et al. 2025). While Instagram enables rapid circulation, the findings also caution that the speed and volume of dissemination may lead to issue simplification, over-framing, and unverified claims, concerns echoed by prior studies (Weninggalih and Pramiyanti, 2025; Maharani, 2024).

4. *Theoretical Integrative Analysis*

Theoretically, these findings can be understood through the mechanisms of constructing moral legitimacy in the digital public sphere. Religious narratives gain legitimacy not solely through the theological authority of their actors but through their ability to link concrete suffering to collective moral obligations. Visualizations of victims, combined with religious references, serve as an affective mechanism that transforms geopolitical issues into urgent moral demands. Within this framework, moral legitimacy is constructed through emotional resonance and the narrative's ability to be reproduced by the public, rather than through formal institutional claims.

In contrast, the state narrative represents institutional authority operating through procedural and diplomatic logic. In the context of Instagram, this logic is less compatible with a communication ecosystem that prioritizes affection, speed, and personalization. As a result, the state's legitimacy in this space tends to be contested, not due to the absence of formal authority, but due to the limitations of moral performativity within the platform's format. These findings suggest that the religion-state tension on Instagram is not simply a conflict of discourse but rather a difference in legitimacy mechanisms: moral-affective versus institutional-procedural. The differentiation of public responses reinforces the argument that legitimacy is relational and not singular. Supportive publics reinforce religious legitimacy through emotional affiliation and participatory practices, while critical publics serve as countervailing mechanisms that challenge moral claims deemed excessive or out of context. Ambivalent publics demonstrate the limits of digital legitimacy, where moral solidarity does not always translate into complete trust or unconditional support. Thus, legitimacy in platform spaces is not stable but is continually negotiated through symbolic and affective interactions.

It's important to note that these findings should not be generalized as a universal pattern for all humanitarian issues or all social media platforms. This analysis is contextual and tied to the case of the Palestinian issue on Instagram within the Indonesian context, where religion holds a strong social position and the digital public is relatively responsive to religious-based humanitarian narratives. Therefore, the legitimacy contestations uncovered should be understood as specific configurations emerging from the intersection of issues, actors, and platform characteristics.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that Instagram remediates the relationship between religion and state by providing an arena where moral legitimacy can rival and, in some cases, surpass

institutional legitimacy. However, the dominance of a particular narrative is not absolute but rather depends on the diverse and ever-changing dynamics of public response. By clearly separating empirical findings from theoretical interpretations, this study emphasizes that religion-state contestation in the digital space is a multi-layered, contextual social process that cannot be reduced to activism or amplification alone.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that Instagram functions not merely as a channel for information dissemination or digital activism, but as a theoretical arena in which religious and state authority are contested and negotiated through global humanitarian issues. Legitimacy in the digital public sphere is no longer primarily secured through formal institutional status; rather, it is produced through actors' capacity to generate moral resonance, cultivate public affect, and sustain participatory engagement over time. The findings therefore extend prevailing accounts of religion–state relations by demonstrating that digital platforms reconfigure legitimacy from a predominantly hierarchical mechanism into one that is increasingly relational and performative, contingent upon the dynamics of public interaction. With regard to religious authority, legitimacy is strengthened less by theological position or organisational standing than by the ability to translate moral values into visual and affective narratives that can be repeatedly circulated and reproduced by digital publics, drawing power from empathy, solidarity, and affective mobilisation. By contrast, the study highlights the limits of state authority within platform environments optimised for emotional engagement: diplomatic and procedural state narratives often struggle to compete with humanitarian–religious storytelling, rendering the state comparatively reactive in digital discourse. This does not amount to a complete delegitimation of the state, but indicates a shifting arena in which the state must negotiate legitimacy alongside non-state actors amid intensifying public fragmentation.

Within the framework of digital humanism, the study reveals a marked ambivalence. On the one hand, Instagram enables the expansion of empathy across boundaries, strengthens solidarity, and facilitates the mobilisation of support for humanitarian causes. On the other, the predominance of emotionally charged narratives introduces risks of oversimplification, discursive conflict, polarisation, and the circulation of claims that are not consistently verified. Digital humanism thus emerges paradoxically from religion–state contestation: it amplifies moral concern while simultaneously deepening competition over legitimacy and exacerbating public fragmentation. Methodologically, the study is limited by its qualitative case-study design and the absence of computational analysis capable of measuring algorithmic effects on content visibility; claims regarding amplification and exposure are grounded in field observations and informants' perceptions rather than direct algorithmic measurement. Further limitations include the focus on a small set of representative accounts within the Indonesian context, restricting wider generalisability, and the reliance on publicly available content, which cannot capture private interactions, closed messaging, or internal moderation practices that may also shape narrative circulation. Future research should therefore combine qualitative approaches with computational methods to map engagement networks, visibility patterns, and narrative diffusion more precisely, pursue cross-platform comparisons (e.g., TikTok, X, and YouTube), and adopt longitudinal designs to examine how religious and state legitimacy shifts across the escalation and de-escalation of humanitarian crises. Overall, this study contributes to theories of digital religion and political communication by showing that religion–state contestation in humanitarian contexts is best understood not simply as digital activism, but as an ongoing process of platform-mediated legitimacy negotiation,

through which religion, the state, and publics collectively (re)produce contemporary forms of humanism and humanitarian politics in the digital age.

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