

# The Role of Ex-Combatants Party against the Advocacy of Political Representation of Women in the Post-Conflict in Aceh, Indonesia

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## **Abstract**

This study discusses the role of ex-combatant parties in advocating post-conflict women by using the Aceh Party case study. Aceh Party has transformed the struggle movement from the armed movement into a political party movement through general elections. Post-conflict combatants formed the ex-combatant party after peace negotiations. The ex-combatant party, which later became the case study material in this study, was the ex-combatant party (Aceh Party). The presence of ex-combatant parties as part of the democratization process has a different reception towards the equality discourse of women in the participation and representation of public spaces, especially representation in politics. However, the Aceh Party tends for women only as a formality to fulfill a 30 percent quota without involving women seriously in political matters. Therefore, the party programs tend to be gender-biased.

**Keywords:** *Political Party, Ex Combatant, Women in Parliament*

## **Abstrak**

Tulisan ini membahas tentang peran mantan kombatan dalam melakukan advokasi perempuan pasca konflik dengan menggunakan studi kasus Partai Aceh. Partai Aceh merupakan salah satu partai yang merubah gerakan perjuangan dari gerakan bersenjata menjadi gerakan partai politik melalui pemilihan umum. Partai eks-kombatan dibentuk oleh kombatan pasca-konflik setelah negosiasi damai. Pihak eks kombatan yang kemudian menjadi bahan studi kasus dalam penelitian ini adalah pihak eks kombatan

(Partai Aceh) di Aceh. Kehadiran partai eks-kombatan sebagai bagian dari proses demokratisasi memiliki resepsi yang berbeda terhadap wacana kesetaraan perempuan dalam partisipasi dan representasi ruang publik, khususnya keterwakilan dalam politik. Partai Aceh memiliki kecenderungan perempuan hanya sebagai formalitas memenuhi kuota 30 persen, tanpa melibatkan perempuan secara serius dalam urusan politik. Hal ini tentunya dapat dilihat bagaimana program partai cenderung bias gender.

**Kata Kunci:** Partai Politik, Eks Kombatan, Perempuan di Parlemen

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## INTRODUCTION

The general election is one part of the democratic process, which then presents the peace process. This process occurred in the 70s, marked by the end of the Cold War. Since then, the United Nations (UN) has developed a formula for the peace process through elections. Therefore, the general election is expected to build a democratic process that can form effective and efficient governance (Ottaway, 2002). David Betham's theory is one of the models of democracy that is transformative based on human rights to answer various post-conflict problems (Parlevliet, n.d.). This democratization process also finally gave space to the birth of multiple parties to compete in creating a peaceful society, including the ex-combatant party. The ex-combatant party is a party formed by post-conflict combatants

after peace negotiations. The ex-combatant party mentioned is in Aceh.

Aceh Party is a former combatant party born after the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Helsinki between Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). One form of the outcome of the signing of the agreement was a memorandum of understanding regarding the formation of political parties based in Aceh following the terms and conditions set by the Indonesian government (Partai Aceh, 2012). In the reconciliation and post-conflict rearrangement process, the government carried out a transformation process for combatants who would fill the system and governance in Aceh, providing opportunities to establish local political parties.

As a party formed by ex-combatants and occurred as a

democratization process, Aceh Party brought with it the discourse of women's equality in participation and representation of public spaces, especially representation in politics. The presence of women in political areas as an implication of democratization has been based on solid laws to participate in politics. Therefore, women as one of the actors in a political party are one indicator for the democratic system to run well (Tabrani, 2006). In the democratic era, women's political participation, especially in parliament, is part of women's human rights, an integral part of democracy. Therefore, women's participation in the political decision-making process needs to be respected by anyone who supports the basic ideas of democracy. The right to be involved in politics, especially in parliament, does not only belong to men and any conspiracy to bring down the dignity of women in politics.

Research on advocating political representation for women during a conflict is essential to be studied further because women are the most disadvantaged objects. Women are considered victims of conflict or war that affect the economy, society, and culture. During the conflict process, sexual crimes often occur,

and the victims of sexual crimes are women. It leads not only to the consequences to destroy the physical and psychological victims, families, and communities but also part of human rights violations that occur in the form of acts of torture and others (*Nobel-Women-Annual-Report-2015\_web*.)

Advocacy for recognizing women's rights, especially their rights in the public domain, is still relatively small. During peacetime, women's role in the public sphere began to be developed, but the strategic role of women was often not valued. So, this form of advocacy can also be a peace consolidation towards achieving sustainable development and peace. Also, when there is a development, in the end, a study of the fairness of women's representation in politics cannot be ignored. They have the potential and provide different touches in working in the political space, especially in the regions.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Political Parties in General**

Robert Michaels defined political parties as a component of political infrastructure with the primary function of getting and maintaining power (Robert

Michaels, 1984). For this reason, political parties carry out a vital activity to participate in various sectors of government.

Political parties as part of democracy certainly have implications for the role and function of political parties. Therefore, political scientists describe the functions and roles of political parties. For example, the political parties' role, according to Miriam Budiardjo, is as a forum for political interaction, socialization, recruitment, and conflict control (Miriam Budiardjo, 2008). Although the four functions are interrelated, what is emphasized in this study is the fourth function, namely conflict management.

### **Ex-combatant party**

Ex-combatants are ex-individual fighters who have taken part directly in hostilities on behalf of one of the warring parties and disarmed. One that limits the definition is Anders Nilson. An ex-combatant has taken a direct part in the hostilities on behalf of one of the warring parties. The individual must also have discharged from or voluntarily left the military group (Anders Nilsson, 2005.) After the peace agreement, the ex-combatants formed a political party as a process

of political transformation. Political parties are a peaceful way to create a democratic order and at the same time provide opportunities for all people in the political sphere. Ex-combatant parties as a means of political aspirations are specific to ex-combatants and are also open to the public and function as an aggregation of interests. As the peace agreement implies, the ex-combatant party needs to be supported by a value or consensus with solid political legitimacy from various parties.

### **Women's Advocacy in Post-Conflict Politics**

The presence of political parties is a peaceful way to create a democratic order and, at the same time, provide opportunities for all people in the political sphere. Although the parties are often gender-biased and identical to a specific gender, women occupying parliamentary seats and fighting for and voicing women's rights are still present. Parliament is a national institution formed and speaks on behalf of the people and fights for the people's interests.

Yves Meny and Andrew Knapp provided categories of roles and functions of political parties as conflict management.

Thus, the party's role as part of the democratic process to channel and convey various interests on behalf of the people. The issue is that female discrimination in every institutionalization becomes an obstacle for women in aggregating their interests. In contrast, political parties are pillars of democracy and institutions to increase political representation, including women's representation. Hence, it is essential to provide advocacy against women from this discrimination.

Advocacy is interpreted with many perspectives, so that it is pretty diverse in understanding. Some experts' understanding of advocacy is: Ritu R Sharma, in his book *Advocacy* (2004), compiled the definition of advocacy:

1. Advocacy is an action aimed at changing policies, positions, or programs of each type of institution.
2. Advocating an action taken to divert people's attention from an issue and provide decision-making input.
3. Activities support and direction in finding solutions.
4. Advocacy refers to an activity that is directed to influence policymaking.

5. Advocacy can use the act of lobbying, as well as providing education to the community to understand problems and solutions.

6. Advocacy is a community presence in the decision-making process (Ritu R Sharma, 2004).

In addition to the above understanding, Ismail Nawawi also defined advocacy as an organized political effort by citizens to transform power relations. The purpose of advocacy is to achieve a change in public policy to benefit the people involved in the process. Advocacy will be effective if carried out following a strategic plan in a reasonable time (Ismail Nawawi, 2009). This study used the Miles and Huberman model (Sugiono, 2016). Data analysis was performed when the data collection took place and after the data collection was completed within a certain period. Activities in data analysis included data reduction, data display, and conclusions: drawing/verification.

- a. Data Reduction

Reducing data means identifying the smallest part of the data found with meaning when associated with the focus or problem of research.

b. Display Data

In this qualitative study, the data presentation was carried out in a brief description and a narrative text. Therefore, it will be easier to understand what is happening by displaying the data and planning further work.

c. Conclusions: Drawing / Verification

The third step in qualitative data analysis is drawing conclusions and verification. The initial findings are still temporary and will change if no substantial evidence supports the following data collection stage. Thus, the results in qualitative research may answer the problem formulation formulated from the beginning, but maybe not, because the problems and problem formulations in qualitative research are still temporary and will develop after the researcher is in the field.

This research used thinking and development by using qualitative methods. Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach to search for and find understanding or understanding of phenomena in a particular contextual setting. Researchers are vital instruments

to capture the meaning, interaction of local values from different local values, which cannot be captured through questionnaires. Qualitative research pays more attention to the process rather than the outcome (Sugiono. 2016). In qualitative research, data collection is not guided by theory but is driven by facts. Therefore, the data analysis conducted is inductive based on the facts found in the field. The aim is to find a deep understanding of the experience of individuals or groups. Inductive is to make observations and then draw conclusions. The qualitative method is used to get in-depth data, data that contains meaning. The meaning is the actual data—the exact data, which is a value behind the data that appears.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

An election is a democratic process that puts the people as a breaker in a political contest that takes place honestly and fairly. The people as the owner of sovereignty determine whether a candidate is elected as a legislative member. *Vox populi, vox Dei*, the voice of the people is the voice of God, the deciding voice of victory. Joseph Schumpeter, continued by Samuel P. Huntington, mentioned that in procedural democracy, people's

political participation plays a legitimate role (Fajraan Zain et al., 2010).

An election as a procedural democratic mechanism contains two keywords: competition between candidates and political participation of the people who assess the competition. Nevertheless, with all the pluses and minuses, the new mechanism will influence democracy if accompanied by political education in the people. In this context, political parties inevitably have to revitalize their roles and performance in building party institutions to become more modern.

A policy is not uncommon to have disadvantages and disadvantages to certain parties. Likewise, in procedural democracy, the party that feels the most disadvantaged by this mechanism is the female candidate. They must fight in a political free market that is socially and culturally, men dominate the perpetrators. With minimal political expertise and practical knowledge, and minimal availability of funds, women candidates are forced to succeed in winning votes. Women politicians face political discrimination, which places them not as partners but as friends behind men.

Judging from political reality, this slips further widens the gender gap in political representation. Moreover, the affirmative action policy has become the state's obligation after the ratification of the UN convention on the elimination of discrimination against women, which is no longer a reference (Irma Latifah Sihite, 2011). Thus, this particular quick action loses its essence. In the end, political life is built by allowing women to be in a peripheral position, fighting alone towards the center of policymaking and decision-making institutions. For this reason, the mechanism of the majority vote becomes a dilemma for women. Nevertheless, one side must accept it because of the nature of democracy, where the people's voice becomes more influential than negotiating the party elite.

The mechanism is indeed cut off the oligarchy practices entrenched in all political parties. However, the life of political democracy that is still shrouded in a patriarchal culture so strongly inhibits all women's movements. Recognition of women's political rights does not guarantee the implementation of a democratic government system where the principles of representation and accountability are functioning

correctly. Political terminology still places political activity solely on voting, campaigning, and lobbying. Therefore, it is not surprising that many women's movements are classified as private, even though they have the dimension of power relations (M. Zainuri, 2007).

The severity of the political field faced by women does not necessarily make the future of their political participation potentially bleak. Raising the political awareness of women voters can be a political choice on a massive scale. Political activities must be directed to this region so that the number of womenfolk voters can benefit women themselves. There is no more logical reason for women than to continue to fight for the future by arranging and closing ranks.

Women must focus more on equality of views about future political needs by learning to leave the ideological entanglement that has kept it in various boxes. This polarization has been so potent throughout political assets owned are silenced by the patriarchal-masculinist system that straddles them. Therefore, the campaign "it's time for women to choose their people" must be a big theme formulated creatively and communicatively. However,

unfortunately, it does not let the female candidates barred in their voices get significant political support. If this happens, it is the same as dead chickens in a rice barn.

### **Overview of the Role of Women in Politics in Post-Conflict Aceh**

The study of women's political participation at the regional level cannot generalize their conditions at the national level. However, it must still be linked to specific region-specific factors because each area has geographical, demographic, cultural, social, economic, and social characteristics. Moreover, laws themselves are generally different. One area known to have structural and cultural uniqueness in Indonesian national politics is Aceh.

Various studies of the history of women in Aceh showed that the position and role of Acehnese women in the public sphere experienced ups and downs in line with multiple changes in society at that time. In other contexts, social contexts in a specific time and space give recognition to certain women's roles and positions. Thus, understanding Acehnese women's identities throughout history are dynamic, regardless of whether the dynamics indicate developments to

be better or vice versa. If examined one by one, so many roles are played by women in filling peace. After a long period of conflict, Aceh is currently in a state of peace. However, the intended peace is not just to stop armed contact, but the meaning of peace is broader than that. Encouraging both physical and non-physical development is one form of contribution to peace.

Various organizations in Aceh, especially those caring for women, give their color to peace in Aceh. These organizations are engaged in various social fields. The types of managed issues are also different, including encouraging the elimination of violence against women and the household, victims of violence during the conflict, counseling, and others. The statement about the vulnerability of the position of Acehnese women was also revealed by Ridwan H Mukhtar 2007. An article entitled *Acehnese Women: From Domestic Roles to Public Spaces* stated that: (Sigarto A Santoso and Ferry Yuniver S).

“The position of women is not free from harassment. The one-sided truth by pragmatists entrenched in state, religious, social, and economic power often marginalizes women. Politics of power already deny women as a

cultural entity that is equal to men. Whereas women should be the first and last stronghold of the humanist rule so that humanity is not extinct”.

Women’s role in filling peace plays a diverse role following two disasters: post-conflict and natural disasters (tsunami). That role is further strengthened and developed in clean and transparent governance carried out on a massive scale. The birth of building gender awareness between sectors, interdisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and policy advocacy activities was more developed to all stakeholders such as ulama, traditional leaders, local government, human rights activists, leaders at the village level, and the community. If, during a conflict, this kind of activity is minimal and has tremendous obstacles, then in a peaceful situation, these programs find their way because support (moral and material) is relatively swift from various parties. Collaboration has begun with the government, non-women activists, national-international institutions, and even fellow women activists themselves (Zubaidah Djohar, 2013).

During the conflict, women helped a lot, such as collecting victims’ bodies, negotiating with the military when they heard about plans to detain or arrest residents,

and even going down to the forest to fight. Women can talk politics, fill decision-making spaces, and color public decisions that have always been oriented to win-lose, right-wrong, and other binary opposition attitudes. Women present to provide solutions that always pay attention to the sustainability of relationships, the sustainability of a community, and generation. The essence of sustainable peace pays attention to welfare, justice, and empowerment (Fajraan Zain et al., 2010).

Seeing the above reality, for peace to be sustainable, women should also be involved in designing Aceh's development strategy and implementing it. Their role continues to grow in the political system, as in the findings of the Aceh Institute 2008, marked by women starting to get involved in the political sphere, increasing political education. Law becomes the legal umbrella for political participation for women.

One way for women to fight for their political participation rights is through political parties. Many female cadres will hopefully be borne by opening up spaces and strategic positions for women. Also, there will be data collection on potential women. However, obstacles and challenges still exist, such as unutilized opportunities,

limited human resources (HR), exclusive political systems at the party level that do not allow women's involvement. In addition, the government does not seem to support women's participation in developing and making gender mainstream, and the absence of sustainable political education ((Fajraan Zain et al. 2010).

Many women seem to be blind and reluctant about politics. Therefore, women's continuous and simultaneous empowerment efforts are necessary for all aspects of life and opening broad public space to involve more. Strategic positions in public decision-making institutions should also include significant women, such as the BRA, Police, Syar'iyah Court. Hopefully, efforts will be made to build a culture of peace through a formal education curriculum that has a gender perspective based on Aceh.

The involvement of women in the peace plan is not only for women's interests but also for the interests of the entire Acehnese society. Through women's participation, the peace and development strategy can be implemented based on the experience and interests of all components, men and women. When all parts have been observed, automatically, the sustainability of peace begins to

shed light towards a just, prosperous, and dignified Aceh because peace without involving women is naive. Development without improving the quality of life of women and generations is artificial.

### **Obstacles to Women's Representation in Politics in Post-Conflict Aceh**

Sri Wahyuni and Joko Sutanto, Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies (CPCRS) researchers, explained their findings related to research on *The Political Role of Women in Pidie and Pidie Jaya Districts*. They found the low acquisition of women's seats in both the executive and legislative branches. Aceh Party (PA), as a political transformation of the Free Aceh Movement, is expected to increase women's role in peacetime. However, the victory of the Aceh Party majority has not encouraged women at the policymakers level (The Globe Journal. 2010.).

The acquisition of seats for PA is significant at the district level. Still, seats for women are smaller than in other districts where the PA seats are not dominant. Whereas in Pidie Jaya, a division district from Pidie, PA seats are 50 percent smaller than Pidie, but the PA women's seats are more significant than Pidie.

In addition, the results showed no clear policy on how to involve women in organizations and the inconsistency of the organization. One of which is the experience at the election where women in the nomination only meet the Act's requirements alone. At the same time, women's obstacles organizing are divided into two, namely internal, such as HR and self-concept, and external, namely the strength of patriarchal views, policies that do not favor women, and an undemocratic environment.

Their role dramatically influences women's role in the legislature and with constituents in organizations and parties. However, so far, women in the legislature and constituents are still weak because their capacity and numbers are still minimal. In the legislature, women council members have not influenced policy and its relationship with constituents. Women councilors have not explained the strategic plans that will be carried out relating to handling conflict victims, especially women in their regions.

### **The Dynamics of Women's Representation in Politics in the Aceh Party**

The movement to increase women's representation in parli-

ament has become an exciting phenomenon in Indonesia due to the small number of women in parliament and the need for women to be more involved in decision-making. However, until the 2009 elections, women's representation in the DPR and DPRD at the provincial level had not yet reached the expected results, only 30 percent. Even though this number is quite significant, women's voices or interests can likely be considered in every policymaking. Therefore, as part of the democratic movement, the struggle to increase women's representation in the Indonesian parliament should ideally be carried out in democratic ways, namely through honest and fair elections. Therefore, political parties and the electoral system should contribute to the plan of women's representation in parliament, especially at the regional level such as Aceh.

Aceh, one of Indonesia's regions, has a long history of conflict with the central government, directly impacting women. Women inevitably become one of the conflict victims' groups traumatized by the violence. They experienced personally or with others becoming a trauma that made a group of Acehnesse women felt lost self-esteem, lack of confidence, fear,

hysterical, and neurotic. As a result, they became a losing and marginalized group. The defeat is a stigma that becomes an obstacle for women in Aceh in fulfilling their regular role in society (Rosnani Sahardin. 2012).

Hence, an institutional system that can provide services to the needs of women is needed, political parties as a forum in developing political policies related to women's interests. Therefore, political parties, national and local political parties, should strongly influence political change. The political parties might have a specific political agenda for women cadres who can be monitored through these local political parties' cadre formation patterns and recruitment patterns. In addition, both national and regional political parties can be strategic media for carrying out and implementing policies related to women's needs.

Table.1 Number of Obtained Female Seats at the 2009 DPRA/Provincial Level

Political Party	Result
PAN	1
Golkar	3
Result	4/69 sears

During 2014-2019, there is an increase in women's representation in parliament from the previous year, 12 people from 81 seats. These 12 people come from national parties, as seen in Table 2.

Table.2 Number of Obtained Female Seats at the 2014 DPRA / Provincial Level

Political Party	Result
Nasdem	1
Golkar	4
PAN	2
Gerindra	1
PNA	1
PA	3
Result	12/81 Seats

In 2019-2024, women's representation in parliament only reaches eight (8) seats lower than the previous

year. Thus, there is a decrease in the quantity of representation of women in parliament, as seen in Table 3.

Table.3 Amount of Obtaining Women Chairs in DPRA / Provincial Level 2019

Political Party	Result
PNA	1
Golkar	3
PA	2
Gerindra	1
Demokrat	1
Result	12/81 Seats

Likewise, women in parliament at the regional / city level in PA have not yet reached satisfactory results even though there are no women representatives from PA, as seen in the following Figure.

Representasion of women in parliament DPRA Aceh 2009-2019 years

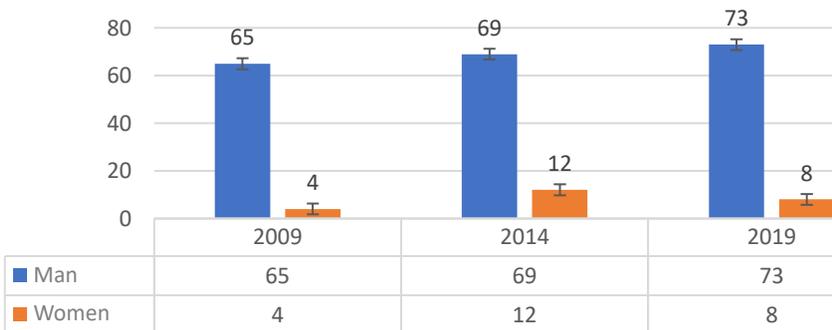


Figure.1 Percentage of Women's Representation in Aceh DPRA 2009-2019

Based on the Figure.1, during 2009-2019, women's representation has declined. Women in local political parties, such as the Aceh party, which is part of the ex-combatant party, have also not provided the best service for women's representation from the party system or party delegation of women to parliamentary institutions. Regarding quantity, female legislative members in the provincial DPRD are still far from expectations. Only four women out of 69 members, or 5.8 percent, have succeeded in sitting in the provincial DPRD based on the 2009-2014 election results. Whereas in 2014-2019, only 12 women succeed in parliament from 81 members of the legislature. The decrease occurs in 2019-2024, with 8 women from 81 legislative members. It is only from national parties dominated to place their delegates in the Provincial DPRD. Therefore, there needs to be a shared awareness to be more concerned with the interests and representation of women in parliament, especially from former combatant parties.

## CONCLUSION

As part of the ex-combatant party, the Aceh Party has not encouraged women on the political

stage. Masculinity in the party is still a serious situation within the party. Political conditions dominated by such a masculine political model will certainly hamper women in their political activities. Dismissing women as politicians will only prevent them from being selected. Even if specified, women are only included in the winning party as they tend to be placed at the highest number.

In the context of democratization in Aceh, women in Aceh do have the right to vote. However, with the dominance of the masculine political model, women tend not to have adequate opportunities to be elected in the competition to occupy various strategic positions in the public sphere, such as the regional legislative institutions. Ideally, the right to run in elections, become candidates, and vote is based on democratic voting. As part of the ex-combatant party, the Aceh Party should provide the best service to women as part of the peace-building process while proving that commitment to the ideals of peace has not led there. Women are more used as a complement to party administration than real women's empowerment.

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