

The Political Career of Maria Ullfah (1934-1947)

Masrokah^{1*}, Siti Masykuroh², Uswatun Hasanah³

^{1,2,3}History of Islamic Civilization, Faculty of Adab, UIN Raden Intan Lampung, Indonesia

*correspondence email : masrokaa@gmail.com

Received 8 February 2026; Received in revised form 18 February 2026; Accepted 17 March 2026

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji perjalanan karier politik Maria Ullfah periode 1934-1947 dengan fokus pada pengaruh keluarga dan pendidikan terhadap pembentukan kesadaran politiknya. Dalam kajian ini, penulis menggunakan metode penelitian sejarah, menghasilkan pembahasan yang menunjukkan bahwa Maria lahir dari keluarga priyayi terdidik yang memberinya akses pendidikan luas hingga studi hukum di Universitas Leiden. Lingkungan intelektual-birokratis dan pengalamannya menyaksikan ketidakadilan terhadap perempuan menumbuhkan kepekaan sosial serta komitmen pada isu diskriminasi gender. Pendidikan Barat dan interaksi dengan tokoh pergerakan seperti Sutan Sjahrir memperkuat kesadarannya sebagai bagian dari bangsa terjajah. Sepulang ke Indonesia, ia aktif dalam organisasi perempuan, pendidikan, Kongres Perempuan Indonesia, KOWANI, dan pemberantasan buta huruf. Pada masa revolusi, ia dipercaya menjadi anggota BPUPKI dan Menteri Sosial perempuan pertama. Temuan menegaskan peran penting latar keluarga, pendidikan, dan pengalaman personal yang berperan signifikan dalam membentuk Maria Ullfah sebagai tokoh sentral gerakan perempuan dalam perjuangan kemerdekaan.

Kata kunci: maria ullfah, gerakan perempuan, emansipasi.

Abstract

This study examines the trajectory of Maria Ullfah's political career from 1934 to 1947, focusing on the influence of family background and education on the formation of her political consciousness. Using historical research methods, this study presents findings showing that Maria was born into a well-educated priyayi family, which provided her with broad access to education, culminating in her legal studies at Leiden University. Her intellectual and bureaucratic environment, along with her experiences witnessing injustices faced by women, fostered social awareness and a strong commitment to addressing gender discrimination. Western education and her interactions with nationalist figures such as Sutan Sjahrir further strengthened her awareness as part of a colonized nation. After returning to Indonesia, she became actively involved in women's organizations, educational activities, the Indonesian Women's Congress, KOWANI, and literacy eradication efforts. During the revolutionary period, she was entrusted with important roles, including serving as a member of BPUPKI and becoming the first female Minister of Social Affairs. The findings underscore the significant role of family background, education, and personal experiences in shaping Maria Ullfah as a central figure in the women's movement during Indonesia's struggle for independence.

Keywords: maria ullfah, women's movement, emancipation.

INTRODUCTION

Maria Ullfah was one of the important figures in the history of the Indonesian national movement, whose contributions reflected the struggle of women to break through social boundaries during the colonial period, eventually making her the

first Indonesian woman to serve as Minister of Social Affairs in the cabinet of Sjahrir. At that time, indigenous women faced double marginalization due to the patriarchal social structure and the discriminatory policies of the colonial government, which significantly limited

their roles in the public sphere and in the national struggle. Under such conditions, education became an important means for women to transcend the restrictions of domestic roles and begin participating in social organizations, modern professions, and the national movement. In that historical context of colonialism, opportunities for women to take part in many aspects of the nationalist struggle were almost entirely closed (Arif Subekti, 2021:184).

In a society that still adhered to a patriarchal system, the limited space for women's movement actually gave rise to the early development of women's political consciousness, which was manifested through educational organizations, social movements, and the First Women's Congress in 1928. The existence and role of women can be examined from the period of Western colonial rule up to the time after independence. As one of the educated women during the colonial era, Maria Ullfah eventually emerged in the public sphere, which at that time was still dominated by men and restricted by discriminatory colonial policies (Terry Irenewaty dan Winda Prasetyaning Adhi, 2016:14).

Maria Ullfah is recorded in history as the first Indonesian woman to obtain the degree of *Meester in de Rechten* (Bachelor of Law) from Leiden University in 1933. After returning to her homeland,

she became active in various women's organizations. Her role became increasingly prominent when she entered the sphere of national politics, especially when she was appointed as the first female Minister of Social Affairs in the Second Sjahrir Cabinet in 1946. This affirmed Maria Ullfah's position as one of the important figures within Indonesia's intellectual and political circles at that time, who fought to improve the status of Indonesian women through active participation in politics (Hestirani, 2020:125).

The story of Maria Ullfah shows that education is the key to opening public spaces for women. The discussion of Maria Ullfah's political career during the period 1934-1947 cannot be separated from the socio-political dynamics of Indonesia before and after independence, because at that time the level of women's political participation was still low (Selvia Adriani, 2024:131).

Based on the background above, the study of Maria Ullfah is important to conduct in order to understand the research gap in this field, namely the limited number of studies that specifically and comprehensively discuss Maria Ullfah's political career during the period of 1934-1947 by placing it within the context of the socio-political dynamics from the colonial era to the post-independence period. The researcher's reason for studying this topic is as follows: 1. So far,

most studies about Maria Ullfah tend to be general biographical works or emphasize her position as the first woman to serve as a minister, without systematically explaining the processes, strategies, and forms of her political participation as an educated woman within a patriarchal culture and colonial structure, 2. The imbalance in Indonesian historiography, which still rarely highlights the political roles of women, has resulted in Maria Ullfah's contributions to the transformation of the women's movement and national politics receiving insufficient attention. This study offers a novel contribution by not only highlighting Maria Ullfah as the first female minister, but also by systematically analyzing the processes, strategies, and forms of her political participation within the context of patriarchy and colonial structures.

METHODS

The research method used in this study is the historical research method, which consists of four stages: heuristics (source collection), source criticism (comparison), interpretation (analysis), and historiography (historical writing) (Abd. Rahman Hamid dan Muhammad Saleh Madjid, 201:43-53).

The first stage is heuristics, which is the process of collecting historical sources relevant to the research topic. At this stage, the author gathers both primary and secondary sources. Primary

sources are obtained from the Delpher digital archives in the form of newspapers, periodicals, and magazines published during the colonial period that document Maria Ullfah's activities from 1934 to 1947, as well as from the KITLV digital archives containing photographs related to her period of education. Meanwhile, secondary sources are obtained from the book *Maria Ullfah Subadio: Pembela Kaumnya* by Maria Ulfah Subadio (1985) and relevant scholarly articles accessed through Google Books, Google Scholar, and Publish or Perish.

The second stage is source criticism, which aims to assess the validity and credibility of the historical sources that have been collected. At this stage, the author conducts external criticism by examining the origin of the sources, the time of publication, and the background of the author or the publishing institution. Furthermore, internal criticism is carried out by comparing the content of different sources to evaluate objectivity, consistency of information, and possible bias, especially in colonial sources. Sources that are irrelevant or doubtful are then eliminated.

The third stage is interpretation. At this stage, the author analyzes and interprets the data as well as the dynamics of Maria Ullfah's political career within the social and political context of Indonesia during the colonial period and the early years after independence.

The final stage is historiography, which is the process of writing the research results in the form of a systematic, chronological, and analytical historical narrative. The interpreted facts are organized with a focus on discussing the trajectory of Maria Ullfah's political career during the period 1934-1947.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Socio-Political Conditions of the Colonial Period as the Background of the National Movement in the 1930s-1940s.

The socio-political conditions of Indonesia during the 1930s-1940s became an important background for the development of the national movement. During this period, the Dutch colonial government implemented increasingly repressive policies in response to the growing rise of national awareness. On the other hand, nationalism continued to develop through the role of intellectuals and the emergence of various women's organizations, especially after the Youth Pledge of 1928. However, long before that, Indonesian women had already played an active role in the struggle toward independence. Women's involvement was not only as supporters behind the scenes, but also as active participants who helped build a sense of nationalism and a strong national identity. Women were not merely passive participants in these major historical

events, but also took real roles as agents of change (Simaremare dkk, 2025:1).

The colonial government's concern over the growing national movement led them to dissolve nationalist parties and arrest as well as exile their leaders. These repressive policies narrowed the political space, causing the struggle to shift toward educational and intellectual paths, including opening opportunities for women's participation. Since 1901, through the Ethical Policy, the Dutch East Indies government provided education for Indonesian children from elite families, even allowing them to study in Europe, with the expectation that they would support Dutch authority over the Indonesian people (Gadis Rasyid, 1985:,2).

This Ethical Policy was implemented to guide Indonesia toward progress, but it was not free from the interests and control of the Dutch colonial government (Susilo, 2018: 407). Since 1893, women's interest in pursuing formal education increased through *kweekschools* established by both the government and private institutions to meet the need for elementary school teachers. In 1920, the government reformed teacher training schools and provided greater opportunities for women, along with the growing number of schools specifically for girls. The curriculum included the Dutch language, storytelling, arts, games, handicrafts, natural sciences, health, hygiene, teaching methods, history,

geography, and writing (Suwigyo, 2012: 97).

The impact of this Ethical Policy was the emergence of intellectuals who eventually realized that their nation was under colonial rule and began to seek change. (Shelita Bunga Apriyana, 2022:22).

A Brief Biography and the Early Political Career of Maria Ullfah, 1934-1947



Figure 1. Family Photo: From left to right; Iwanah, R.A. Hadidjah Djajaningrat, R.A.A. Mohammad Achmad, Hatnan, and Maria Ullfah.

Source: Maria Ullfah Subadio, *Pembela Kaumnya*, 1985, p. 17.

Maria Ullfah was the daughter of the Regent of Kuningan, Raden Adipati Arya Mohammad Ahmad, and R.A. Hadidjah Djajadiningrat. She was born in Serang on August 18, 1911 (YPR.Achmad, 2023:4). Maria was the second of three siblings born to parents who were deeply committed to prioritizing education. Her younger siblings were named Iwanah and Hatnan, while her eldest sibling passed

away in childhood. The name Maria is the Western spelling of Mariam, the name of the mother of Jesus. Her name was originally meant to be Mariam Ullfah, but because it did not sound pleasing, her father used the Western spelling, becoming Maria Ullfah, and she was commonly called Itje in daily life (MPB. Manus dkk, 1993:109).

As a daughter of a noble family, Maria Ullfah held the title Raden Ajeng. However, from a young age, she valued intellectual achievement more than social status. She took greater pride in the *Meester in de Rechten* degree she earned from Leiden University than in her noble title. Her humble and progressive attitude was influenced by her father's upbringing, as he treated his sons and daughters equally and encouraged them to pursue higher education, including studies abroad.

Maria Ullfah's awareness of women's low social standing arose when she witnessed her aunt, R.A. Soenwanda, being divorced for not having children, subsequently ostracized, and considered a family disgrace. At that time, women were always blamed in cases of divorce, while upper-class women lacked education and independence. This experience left a deep impression on Maria and strengthened her resolve to advocate for women's dignity (Gadis Rasyid, 1985:8).

When her family first moved to Jakarta, Maria Ullfah began her education

in 1916 when she enrolled in the Eerste (ES) school in Batavia, which later changed its name to Hollands Inlandsche School (HIS). This school was intended for elite indigenous children and used Dutch as the language of instruction (Fazriani Putri Utami, Fatiyah, 2025:131). In 1917, Maria Ullfah continued her elementary education at a school on Cikini Street, and later moved to SD Willemslaan (now Jalan Perwira). After completing elementary school, she proceeded to the Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs (MULO) in Batavia, equivalent to junior high school. While studying there, she witnessed the birth of the Youth Pledge (Sumpah Pemuda) on October 28, 1928, which deeply moved her. She then continued to the Algemeene Middelbare School (AMS), equivalent to senior high school, where her academic abilities became increasingly outstanding. Her full awareness of her nation's fate as a colonized people later developed while she pursued legal studies in Leiden, the Netherlands.



Figure 2.

“KOENINGAN – The daughter of the Koeningan Regent, Mrs. Maria Ulfah, and Mr. Raden Santoso Wirodihardjo got married.” Participants of the 10-year commemoration event of Indonesian students in Batavia.

Source: (Nijmegen Regional Archives, 1938).

Maria Ullfah married R. Santoso Wirodihardjo, S.H., in Cirebon on February 28, 1938. From that time on, her name became Maria Ullfah Santoso, because in the tradition of that era, it was quite common for educated Indonesian women to add their husband's name as a form of social identity, especially among bureaucrats, politicians, or public figures. Maria became the only woman who needed to obtain state permission to marry. (Yakutati Ismatillah L., 2018:19). The wedding took place in Cirebon Regency at the residence of the regent in Kuningan. traditional attire amidst a spread of flowers (Sijthoff, 1938:1).



Figure 3. Participants of the 10-year commemoration event of Indonesian students in Batavia.

Source: Digital Collection

Not much is recounted about Maria Ullfah's married life with Santoso, S.H.

Their marriage ended in 1948 with Santoso's death from Dutch gunfire. As an intellectual, Maria Ullfah emphasized formal education while also actively participating in social and political organizations to raise women's awareness of their rights. In the early 20th century, and voting as domains for men, but in the 1930s this view began to change, giving rise to a new generation of female leaders. She saw that women's suffrage and representation in the legislative council could have a positive impact on the Indonesian women's movement (Hestirani, 2020:7). In the 1930s, Maria Ullfah was active in the Indonesian Women's Association (PPI) and the Indonesian Women's Congress, encouraging women to take roles not only as housewives but also in education, social affairs, and politics. During her time in the Netherlands, Maria Ullfah met national movement figures such as Haji Agus Salim, Mohammad Hatta, and Sutan Sjahrir. Sjahrir had the greatest influence on her thinking, guiding her toward national consciousness by inviting her to political meetings, including the League Against Imperialism, and providing her with political readings. To him, Maria also expressed her determination to dedicate herself to advancing the people, especially women who still lacked access to education (MPB. Manus dkk, 1933: hlm 111).

After completing her studies, Maria Ullfah returned to Indonesia and took a short break to ease her homesickness while caring for her father, who was still serving as the Regent of Kuningan at the time. While accompanying him, she also accepted an offer to work as a temporary staff member for six months at the Cirebon Regency Office (Mohamad Cholid, 1988:109).

1. Worked at the Cirebon Regency Office as a temporary staff member

Based on Decree No. 153 dated December 20, 1933, Raden Adjeng Maria Ullfah, daughter of Raden Moechamad Achmad from Kuningan, was appointed as a temporary employee at the royal office in Cirebon for a period of three months, which could be extended as needed outside the regular staffing schedule while awaiting approval from the Cirebon Regency Council. In this position, she was assigned to the regency office and received a monthly allowance of 200 guilders (Hallerman, 1934:3).

In 1934, Maria Ullfah worked as a temporary staff member at the Cirebon Regency Office for six months, with the task of drafting traffic regulations (*Wegverkeersordonantie*). However, Maria felt that her field of expertise did not match her work, because the job was not directly

related to the people. During her time working in Cirebon, Maria also reunited with Sjahrir after their last meeting in the Netherlands (Saputra, 2025:47).

2. School Teacher at Muhammadiyah and People's Schools, 1934-1942

After no longer working in Cirebon, Maria Ullfah was invited by her friend from her studies in the Netherlands, Soegiarti, to become a teacher at the Muhammadiyah High School in Batavia. At that time, the school, located on Jalan Kramat, was led by Ir. Djuanda, who was in need of additional teaching staff. Maria Ullfah accepted the offer and began teaching there. After finishing her work at the Cirebon office, Maria moved to Jakarta to teach German, History, and Constitutional Law. At the Muhammadiyah school, in addition to general subjects, students also received Islamic religious education. Furthermore, the school had a nationalist and anti-colonial character, which led the Dutch East Indies government to label Muhammadiyah schools as *wilde scholen* or wild schools.

Maria Ullfah taught at the 'People's School' (*Perguruan Rakyat*), which was founded by student activists and independence fighters, following the principles of the 'Foundations of the People's School' (*Sendi-sendi*

Perguruan Rakyat) that emphasized the fundamentals of Indonesian nationalism. As the first indigenous law expert, she also taught at the Muhammadiyah Junior High School together with Soegiarti, the headmistress who had studied in Deventer.

3. Active in the Indonesian Women's Congress in 1938 and Began Involvement in KOWANI"

Entering the year 1928, awareness began to emerge among women to participate in the national movement. This was marked by the establishment of various women's organizations, such as Poeteri Mahardika and Putri Sedar, as early organizations that accommodated women's aspirations in the struggle for the nation (Hanna Noviana, 2025, p. 32). Later, Kowani emerged, originating from the formation of the Perikatan Perkumpulan Perempoean Indonesia (PPPI), which was established through the First Indonesian Women's Congress on December 22-25, 1928. This organization served as an initial platform to unite various women's organizations in the archipelago and became the foundation for the emergence of a more organized women's movement, as well as strengthening their struggle to obtain

equal rights, opportunities, and positions in social and political life.

In subsequent developments, Batavia became the center of indigenous intellectual activity, where figures including Maria Ulfah formed a committee to establish the Center for Cultural Development, later known as "AID." Maria's presence marked the beginning of opening spaces for women in the intellectual and political spheres. On the 13th, the committee held a meeting at the home of Dr. Poerbatjaraka to determine working methods and the composition of the definitive board (Jurnal Perdagangan Untuk Hindia Belanda, 1936:1).

KOWANI held its first Women's Congress in Jakarta, where Maria Ulfah delivered an inspiring speech emphasizing the importance of women's education and political awareness, while encouraging their active involvement in social and political spheres. The congress was attended by more than 500 women from across Indonesia, demonstrating high enthusiasm for the struggle for their rights. In July 1938, the Indonesian Women's Congress was convened to discuss issues and the role of women in society, with open participation for all women in Indonesia. The congress addressed several key topics, including: (1) The legal status of women workers,

presented by Mrs. Siti Soendari, (2) The position of women under Indonesian law, presented by Mrs. Maria Ulfah, (3) Prostitution in Indonesia, discussed by Mrs. Roemesari, (4) Women's suffrage (People, 1938, hlm 1).

The Third Indigenous Women's Congress will be held in Bandung from July 23-28 to discuss the position and role of indigenous women in Indonesia. Topics to be presented include the position of indigenous women under marriage law by Maria Ulfah, women's suffrage by Datoefc Toemenggoeng, the position of women workers by A. Rachim, and the education of indigenous girls by N. Roemsari.

"Suara dari Indonesia," a historical publication, contains information about the Third Indonesian Women's Congress held in Bandung and quotes Maria Ulfah as follows:

"In various countries, we observe a tendency to focus attention on the issue of divorce. One reason for this is that in Indonesia, the divorce rate is much higher than in countries that follow a monogamous system. This tendency is indeed concerning, because polygamy is more common here. Almost all married women are left to live on their own, and are therefore forced to earn a living. Could this be in accordance with the Holy Scriptures? Our Prophet always

protected women. Isn't it time to improve the situation?" (Anon, 1938:7).

Fifteen indigenous women's associations will be active members of this congress, while another fifteen have registered to attend (Institut Tropis Kerajaan (KIT), 1938, hlm 1). Maria Ulfah has been active in the Indonesian women's movement since the 1930s, including through various organizations that later united under Kowani. Her consistent dedication led to her being entrusted with the leadership of Kowani in the early 1950s. Subsequently, the organization grew and collaborated with other women's organizations (Bode, 1955:1)

4. Chair of the Marriage Consultation Bureau (BKP) (1937)

Board meetings were held in Bandung on May 14 and 21. At the members' meeting on May 18, there was a change in management. During this meeting, the composition of the board was revised: Mrs. W. Dommissie-v. Alphen de Veer resigned, while Mrs. A.M. Tan-Schepers and Mr. J.D. Hermans-Lebert were appointed as board members. In the same meeting, Mrs. G.H.J. Bleeker-Hendriks delivered a lecture titled "*Children*", which was greatly appreciated by the members. In addition, a proposal was submitted for collaboration with the Housewives'

Association, NIOG, and IEV to advocate for the screening of more cultural films in children's cinemas.

The second Annual General Meeting of the Perhimpunan Isteri Priyayi Bumiputera in Surabaya (June 3-6) discussed the role of indigenous women on the board, training indigenous girls as nurses, as well as visits to orphanages, weaving schools, and hospitals. Meanwhile, the issue of indigenous marriage in the Netherlands, related to a draft law limiting married women's employment, prompted the Committee for the Protection of Indigenous Women and Children to send a circular to indigenous women's organizations to draft more appropriate marriage regulations. At that time, 26 indigenous women's associations were involved, with Mangoensarkoro as chair and Maria Ulfah Santoso as secretary (Algemeen Handelsblad, 1938: 2).

Subsequently, a new association was established in Yogyakarta in July 1939, aimed at supporting women in Islamic marriages. She became the leader of the Indonesian Women's Protection Body in Marriage, a social association that provided assistance to Indonesian women with marriage-related issues (Anon, 1940:7).

5. Chair of the Indonesian Wives' Organization (1940-1942)

Amid the growing discussions about the women's movement, a question arose among women themselves: were their activities truly a movement or merely ordinary activities? In response, Maria Ulfah emphasized that women's activities through organizations indeed constituted a movement. According to her, the women's movement was an effort to transform old conditions into better ones and to create greater space for women, in line with the struggle they were undertaking.

The Indonesian Wives' Women's Association set a six-month program to eradicate illiteracy and provide marriage counseling. On Friday evenings, they held psycho-practical performances in the courtyard of Senen Station, with the proceeds donated to the "Istri Indonesia" Children's Clinic and Muhammadiyah, with Maria Ulfah Santoso serving as Chair of the Executive Board (Perpustakaan Kerajaan C 96, 1941:1).

From 1940 to 1942, she was entrusted as the Chair of the Indonesian Wives' Organization (OI). As Chair, Maria Ulfah led the organization in raising women's awareness, eradicating illiteracy, fostering unity, and organizing social activities. Her role in the OI became a stepping stone for her broader

contributions, eventually leading to her recognition as Indonesia's first female Minister of Social Affairs. She also led the Indonesian Women's Protection Body in Marriage, a social association in Yogyakarta founded in July 1939 to assist women in addressing marriage-related issues (Atria, 1940:5).

Role in National Politics Member of the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence (BPUPKI), 1945

In February 1944, American forces captured Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands from Japan, followed by bombings of Japanese territories beginning in June. Japan's defeats continued in July with the fall of Saipan in the Mariana Islands, which triggered a cabinet crisis in Japan. In September, American forces landed on Morotai, near Halmahera, while Manila began to be bombarded. Facing this situation, Hayashi, as the head of the Japanese military administration in Indonesia, proposed that the Japanese government promise independence to Indonesia to prevent Indonesian leaders from turning against a weakening Japan. This proposal was later accepted by Prime Minister Koiso.

Subsequently, on March 1, 1945, the Japanese government established the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence

(BPUPKI) on the initiative of Japanese Army Commander Kumakichi Harada. The composition of its board was announced on April 29, 1945, coinciding with the birthday of Emperor Tenno Heika. BPUPKI was chaired by Dr. K.R.T. Radjiman Wedyodiningrat, with Ichibangase Yoshio and R.P. Soeroso serving as vice chairs. The committee consisted of 62 Indonesian members, including two women one of whom was Maria Ulfah and seven Japanese members.

During the Japanese occupation (1944-1945), Maria Ulfah worked in the Department of Justice and served as a member of the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence (BPUPKI), so issues regarding the Marriage Law received less attention due to the focus on the struggle for independence. In the process leading up to the proclamation, many women played active roles, such as Fatmawati, Maria Ulfah Santoso, Suwarni Pringgodigdo, and Artinah Syamsudin, contributing in the fields of health, education, skills training, and logistics for the national struggle (Sondarika, 2017:215).

The first session of BPUPKI was held from May 29 to June 1, 1945, chaired by Dr. Radjiman Wedyodiningrat, and discussed the foundation of the state. The second session, held from July 10 to 17, 1945, focused on drafting the Constitution and established the Committee for the

Basic Law, consisting of 19 members, with Ir. Soekarno as chair and Maria Ulfah as one of the members. (Winarmo dkk, 2014:137-138). At the end of the first day of the session, three working committees were formed: the first, a committee to draft the Constitution; the second, a committee to study matters of national defense; and the third, a committee to study matters of finance and the economy (Nana Setialaksana, 2017:155).

Minister of Social Affairs in the Sjahrir Cabinet (March 1946-June 1947)

After Sutan Sjahrir was appointed Prime Minister as well as Minister of Foreign Affairs, he asked Maria Ulfah to become the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, Maria declined, feeling it was not appropriate since she was still working at the Ministry of Justice, which was then led by Prof. Soepomo. At Maria's suggestion, the position was subsequently given to Oetoyo Ramelan. Afterward, Sjahrir offered Maria another position, as a personal assistant with a special assignment as a liaison officer between the Indonesian government, the Republican army, and the Allied forces dominated by the British, to ensure more effective political-military communication and coordination during the early period of the revolution. In this way, Maria ultimately agreed.

After Maria was appointed, the Republic of Indonesia newspaper reported

that Maria Ulfah had submitted a draft law to KNIP for approval. According to this draft law, employing women or children under the age of 16 at night would be prohibited. Kindergartens would also be established for children up to the age of 5. (Kurir Limburg baru; Dagblad, 1946).

Sutan Sjahrir announced his new cabinet by appointing deputy ministers for nearly all ministries. Haji Agus Salim served as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Samakidoen as Minister of Home Affairs, Dr. Sjarifoedin held one of the key portfolios, Dr. Soerachman as Minister of Finance, Mr. Hadi as Minister of Justice, and Aruelji as Minister of Defense, specifically for the Navy. (Surat kabar NV Rotterdamsch, 1946:1).

Sutan Sjahrir chose Maria Ulfah as a minister to demonstrate that Indonesia was not a “puppet” of Japan and to encourage the British to be more receptive to complaints presented by a woman. When forming his second cabinet, Sjahrir offered Maria Ulfah the position of Minister without Portfolio. She was initially hesitant to accept the offer, but after Sjahrir said, “I never studied to become Prime Minister either,” Maria finally agreed. As Minister of Social Affairs, her main task was to carry out the repatriation of Japanese prisoners of war who were still in Indonesian territory, while also showing the Allied forces that the Republic’s government was capable of handling the matter independently,

without their intervention. (Gadis Rasyid, 1985:79).

In the end, Maria Ulfah resigned as Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia during Sjahrir’s third cabinet and officially relinquished her position on June 26, 1947 (Gadis Rasyid, 1985:105).

CONCLUSION

Maria Ulfah grew up in an educated priyayi family with a strong intellectual tradition and involvement in the colonial bureaucracy. Her family environment valued education, and her early exposure to injustices against women such as the fate of her aunt, who was divorced and ostracized served as initial factors that shaped her social sensitivity and political awareness. The Western education she received from childhood through her studies at Leiden University further broadened her understanding of law, human rights, and women’s equality. It was in Leiden that she also interacted with figures of the national movement, such as Sutan Sjahrir, which strengthened her commitment to fighting for the nation and for Indonesian women.

Upon returning to her homeland, Maria became active in education, women’s organizations, and the national movement. She played a significant role in the Indonesian Women’s Congress, KOWANI, the Indonesian Wives’ Organization, as well as institutions for the protection of women in marriage. Her

efforts were directed toward systematically improving women's legal status, eradicating illiteracy, and encouraging women's political participation. During the revolutionary period, her intellectual capacity and experience earned her a position as a member of BPUPKI and later as Indonesia's first female minister (Minister of Social Affairs in the Sjahrir Cabinet).

Through these various roles, Maria Ulfah not only paved the way for women to enter the public sphere but also contributed directly to the formation of the nation's foundational principles. Thus, the influence of her family and education shaped her into a central figure in the Indonesian women's movement and the struggle for independence

REFERENCES

- Abd. Rahman Hamid dan Muhammad Saleh Madjid. (2018). *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah*. Yogyakarta.
- Algemeen Handelsblad*. (1938).
- Anon. (1938). *De Tijd : Surat Kabar Harian Keagamaan-Politik*.
- Anon. (1940). *Perempuan dan Komunitas; majalah bulanan Asosiasi Belanda untuk Kepentingan Perempuan dan Kewarganegaraan yang Setara*. Van StockumDen Haag.
<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMALET01:000463001:00011>
- Arif Subekti. (2021). Tinjauan Konseptual Perempuan dan Modernitas Dalam Ruang Kolonialisme. *Jurnal Sejarah, Budaya Dan Pengajarannya*, 15(1), 184.
<https://doi.org/10.17977/um020v15i12021p183>
- Atria, I. P. U. E. dan S. P. (1940, January). *Judul Perempuan dan Komunitas; majalah bulanan Asosiasi Belanda untuk Kepentingan Perempuan dan Kewarganegaraan yang Setara*, vol. 11, 1940, no. 1, 01-01-1940. Van StockumDen Haag, 5.
<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMALET01:000463001:00011>
- Bode, J. (1955). *Nieuws, handels- en advertentieblad voor Nederlandsch-Indie*.
- Fazriani Putri Utami, Fatimah, H. S. (2025). Maria Ulfah: Jejak Hukum Perempuan dalam Membangun Bangsa Indonesia, 1938-1973. *Jurnal El Tarikh: Journal of History, Culture and Islamic Civilization*, 6(2), 131.
<http://ejournal.radenintan.ac.id/index.php/eltarikh/index>
- Gadis Rasyid. (1985). *Maria Ulfah Subadio Pembela Kaumnya* (Cetakan Ke). N.V. Bulan Bintang.
- Hallerman, J. (1934, February). Pos Sumatra. *Medan*, 3.
<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=dd:011023617:mpeg21:p005>
- Hestirani, L. (2020). PEMIKIRAN MARIA ULLFAH SANTOSO TENTANG HAK PILIH PEREMPUAN INDONESIA (1938-1941)). *Handep: Jurnal Sejarah Dan Budaya*, 3(2).
<https://doi.org/10.33652/handep.v3i2.104>
- Institut Tropis Kerajaan (KIT)*. (1938).
<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=dd:010865149:mpeg21:p003>
- Jurnal Perdagangan Untuk Hindia Belanda*. (1936, April). Ultgave van de N.V. Publiciteits. Sn, 1.
<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMALET01:000463089:mpeg21:p00001>
- Kurir Limburg baru; Dagblad. (1946). *Surat Kabar Harian Limburg*. Heerlen.
<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=dd:010416300:mpeg21:p001>
- Mohamad Cholid, D. (1988). Maria Ulfah Kekasih Abadi Soebadio. *Jakarta*, 109.
- MPB. Manus dkk. (1933). *Tokoh-Tokoh Badan Penyelidik Usaha-Usaha*

- Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (p. 111).
- MPB. Manus dkk. (1993). *Tokoh-Tokoh Badan Penyelidik Usaha-Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (Zulfikar Ghazali (Ed.); Vol. 1).
- Nana Setialaksana. (2017). Peranan Badan Penyelidik Usaha-Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (BPUPKI) 1945 Dalam Proses Menuju Kemerdekaan Indonesia. *Jurnal Artefak History Dan Education*, 4(2), 155.
- Pengaruh Politik Etis dan Pengaruh Bagi Lahirnya Pergerakan Bangsa Indonesia*. (n.d.).
- People, T. D. (1938). *Surat Kabar Harian Belanda*.
<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=dd:010474355:mpeg21:p002>
- Perpustakaan Kerajaan C 96. (1941). *Surat Kabar Batavia. Kollf & Co. (Batavia)*, 1.
<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=dd:011221713:mpeg21:p003>
- Saputra, S. (2025). *Peran Maria Ulfah dalam Memperjuangkan Kesetaraan Gender di Indonesia Tahun 1934-1975* [Peran Maria Ulfah dalam Memperjuangkan Kesetaraan Gender di Indonesia Tahun 1934-1975].
<https://repository.unsil.ac.id>
- Selvia Adriani, S. T. M. (2024). Partisipasi Perempuan dalam Politik. *Of Practice Learning and Educational Development*
<https://Digitalpress.Gaes-Edu.Com/Index.Php/Jpled>, Vol 4, No. 2, 131.
- Shelita Bunga Apriyana. (2022). Pengaruh Kebijakan Politik Etis Terhadap Perkembangan Pendidikan di Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Sosial (JIPSI)*, 1(1), 2.
<https://doi.org/DOI:10.58540/jipsi.v1i1.17>
- Sijthoff, A. . (1938). *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*. Kota Rotterdam.
<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MKB32:164694027:mpeg21:p00023>
- Simaremare, D. (2025). Peran Strategis Perempuan dan Pemuda Dalam Sumpah Pemuda 1928: Sebagai Tinjauan Historis Inklusif. *Pendas : Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 10(307), 1.
[file:///C:/Users/acer/Downloads/1032_Elsa+Manora+Simaremare,+Shintya+Simamora,+Winda+Nidarwati+Gulo,+Adolf+Tarigan,+Puteri+Atikah+_jurnal_perempuan\[1\]\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/acer/Downloads/1032_Elsa+Manora+Simaremare,+Shintya+Simamora,+Winda+Nidarwati+Gulo,+Adolf+Tarigan,+Puteri+Atikah+_jurnal_perempuan1.pdf)
- Sondarika, W. (2017). Peranan Wanita Dalam Perjuangan Kemerdekaan Indonesia Pada Masa Pendudukan Jepang. *Jurnal Historia*, 5(2), 215.
- Surat kabar NV Rotterdamsch. (1946). *Bredasche courant. Surat Kabar NV Rotterdamsch*, 1.
<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MSAB03:000068691:mpeg21:a0003>
- Suwigyo, A. (2012). *The Breach In the Dike: Regime Change Standardization of Public Primary-School Teacher Training In Indonesia (1893-1969)*. Disertasi, Universitas Leiden.
- Terry Irenewaty dan Winda Prasetyaning Adhi. (2016). Eksistensi Perjuangan Wanita Pada Masa Kolonial. *Pendidikan Sejarah, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial, UNY*, 11(2), 14.
- Winarmo dkk. (2014). *Seri Pendidikan Politik I: Pancasila dan UUD NKRI 1945*. Ombak.
- Yakutati Ismatillah L. (2018). *Peran Maria Ulfah di Bidang Sosial Keagamaan*. Jurusan Sejarah dan Peradaban Islam Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta.
- YPR.Achmad. (2023). *Peran Maria Ulfah Pada Pentas Politik Nasional Indonesia Tahun 1935 -1973*. Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung.

