

Dalam Dunia Fana
In This Perishable World

by Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf

Secretary for Political & International Affairs, Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council

Published and widely distributed in July 2014,
amid blatant attempts to steal Indonesia's presidential election

Dedicated to H.E. Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid
and all who share in his struggle for good governance and democratic reform

In this savage, transitory world,
will you strive to create your own destiny
or delegate that authority to someone else
who promises to fight on your behalf?

Amid a sea of competition,
where so many seek a comfortable resting place,
will you join hands (with others who are upright)
and participate in the desperate (struggle),
for the cause of human dignity?
Or will you eagerly join the stampede,
stretching out your hands
as you scramble and fight to grab
(politicians') handouts
and (attract their grudging) benevolence (to you)?

Amid a siege of brigands
do you have the strength
to endure the torment still longer,
to sacrifice yet more,
for the sake of human dignity and self-respect?
Or do you prefer to survive as best you can,
allowing criminals to grab whatever they please (from others),
so long as they toss a few scraps your way?

Later, standing before a mirror
will you have the courage
to look at yourself,
or will you turn away
in order to sleep better at night?

Will your great-grandchildren
be slaves who curse you
(for having sold their future to tyrants)?
Or will they be indomitable men and women
who shed tears whenever they recall
your bitter tribulation and service (to God and humanity)?