

World's largest Muslim youth organisation calls for re-examination of Islamic text

By Amy Chew | 22 May 2017 09:33PM



Members of GP Ansor read the GP Ansor Declaration on Humanitarian Islam on Monday (May 22). (Photo: James B Hoesterey)

JOMBANG, East Java, Indonesia: The world's largest Muslim youth organisation Gerakan Pemuda Ansor (GP Ansor) - the youth wing of Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation Nadlatul Ulama (NU) - on Monday (May 22) called for a re-examination of Islamic text to adapt it to modern civilisation.

The call is a bold move from NU and comes three weeks after [the jailing of Jakarta's first ethnic Chinese Christian governor](#) Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, also known as Ahok. His conviction has raised concerns that extremists are gaining an upper hand in a country long known as the face of moderate Islam.

NU claims to have 50 million followers. Its youth wing GP Ansor warned that failure to re-examine the text will see continued bloodshed in Muslim countries, which could “threaten humanity”.

“A wide discrepancy now exists between the structure of Islamic orthodoxy and the context of Muslims’ actual reality,” said Luthfi Thomafi, a member of GP Ansor’s board. “(This is) due to immense changes that have occurred since the teachings of orthodox Islam, which became largely ossified towards the end of the medieval era.”

“Civil discord, acts of terrorism, rebellion and outright warfare - all pursued in the name of Islam - will continue to plague Muslims and threaten humanity at large, until these issues are openly acknowledged and resolved,” Thomafi added.

Among the complex issues that lie at the heart of this discrepancy are practices governing relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, according to GP Ansor. These include the rights, responsibilities and role of non-Muslims who live in Muslim-majority societies and vice versa.

The group on Monday issued a GP Ansor Declaration on Humanitarian Islam which provides a strategic road map for a coordinated, long-term effort to address issues in the Islamic world.

Key elements in the strategy include:

- New theological discourse (*ijtihad*) to recontextualise Islamic teachings for the modern era;
- Development and adoption of new educational curriculum throughout the Islamic world; and
- Grassroots movement(s) to build societal consensus and political will.

“Our goal is to develop an international network leading to the emergence of a global movement which shall be dedicated to the well-being of humanity as a whole - and to the fostering of a truly global civilisation - inspired by ‘humanitarian Islam’, likened to *Islam rahmatan li al-’alamin*, which serves as a blessing for all creation,” said Thomafi.

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