



2018_10_25_Nusantara Manifesto

***Nusantara Manifesto* Initiates the Renewal of Islamic Teachings through the Recontextualization (i.e., Reform) of Obsolete Tenets within Islamic Orthodoxy**

YOGYAKARTA, Indonesia: For the first time since the late Middle Ages, a large body of Sunni Muslim authorities are engaged in a wide-ranging, concerted and explicit project of theological renewal (i.e., reform). In the words of KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Secretary of the Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council, “This effort will address obsolete tenets within Islamic orthodoxy; realign these problematic tenets with 21st century ‘civilizational reality’; block their political weaponization; and curtail the spread of communal hatred by fostering the emergence of a truly just and harmonious world order, founded upon respect for the equal rights and dignity of every human being.”

This reform effort was officially launched by Gerakan Pemuda Ansor—the NU young adults movement, with over 5 million members—and its international affiliate, Bayt ar-Rahmah, through a [Joint Resolution and Decree](#) that incorporates the [Nusantara Manifesto](#), which Ansor and Bayt ar-Rahmah leaders signed during a plenary session of the Second Global Unity Forum in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, on October 25, 2018. The *Nusantara Manifesto* builds on a centuries-old tradition of de facto renewal (*tajdīd*) practiced by Indonesian *ulama* (Muslim scholars), as exemplified by the late Indonesian President and NU Chairman H.E. Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid, whose seminal article, [“God Needs No Defense.”](#) is incorporated as Section §11.3 of the *Manifesto*. The *Manifesto* also builds upon three previous declarations: the [ISOMIL Nahdlatul Ulama Declaration](#); the [First Global Unity Forum Declaration](#); and the [Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Declaration on Humanitarian Islam](#).

General Chairman of Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, H. Yaqut Qoumas, says “By adopting the *Nusantara Manifesto*, Ansor and Bayt ar-Rahmah are moving systematically, and institutionally, to address obsolete and problematic elements within Islamic orthodoxy that lend themselves to tyranny, while positioning these efforts within a much broader initiative to reject any and all forms of tyranny, and foster the emergence of a global civilization endowed with nobility of character. This call to nobility reflects the primary message of Islam, and of President Wahid, as demonstrated by the *Manifesto*.”

The *Nusantara Manifesto* employs the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh*—the methodology of independent legal reasoning used to create Islamic law, or *fiqh*—to examine why it is theologically valid and necessary for contemporary Muslim scholars to recontextualize obsolete and problematic tenets within Islamic orthodoxy, which are used to justify religious hatred, supremacy and violence. “Changed circumstances necessitate new *ijtihād* to ensure the well-being of humanity (*maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*),” says KH. Aunullah Habib, Director of Rijalul Ansor, the movement’s theological division. “The *Nusantara Manifesto* establishes a framework for the renewal of Islamic discourse and the development of *fiqh al-ḥaḍāra al-‘ālamīyah al-mutaṣahirah*—i.e., new tenets of Islamic law suited to the emergence of a single, interfused global civilization, based on cooperation rather than conflict.”

“Nahdlatul Ulama, with 94 million members the world’s largest Sunni Muslim movement, is bent on [reforming Islam](#),” notes Middle East analyst James Dorsey. This battle for the soul of Islam “is shaped by the need to counter the fallout of a \$100 billion, four decades-long Saudi public diplomacy campaign that... created a breeding ground for more militant and violent strands of the faith.” While Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran instrumentalize Islam in their struggle for geopolitical dominance, “the Nahdlatul Ulama couches its position in terms of Islamic law and jurisprudence...[I]ts strategy, if successful, would significantly impact the [Middle East] region’s political map.”

“We must [liberate Islam](#) from the bondage of history and its weaponization by state and non-state actors,” says Mr. Staquf. “Restoring Islam’s message of compassion will help foster a world in which Islam, and Muslims, are truly beneficent and contribute to the well-being of all humanity.”