



2019_01_03_Towards an Islamic Law Suitable to Our Emerging Global Civilization

Leading Muslim Scholars Encourage the Reform of Problematic Tenets Within Islamic Orthodoxy: “Shall We Remain Silent, or Confront Tyranny?”

REMBANG, Central Java, Indonesia: On January 3, 2019, one of the most respected Islamic boarding schools in Southeast Asia—PP Raudlatut Thalibin—hosted an all-day forum to examine the necessity of recontextualizing (i.e., reforming) obsolete tenets of Islamic orthodoxy that constitute the center of gravity for a wide range of Islamist movements, including ISIS, al-Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood. Entitled “GP Ansor’s *Nusantara Manifesto: Towards an Islamic Jurisprudence [Suitable to Our] Emerging Global Civilization*,” over 70 Islamic scholars from across Indonesia attended the event, co-sponsored by the 5-million-member Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) young adults movement, GP Ansor, and its theological wing, Rijalul Ansor.

In his opening remarks, Rijalul Ansor Director KH. Aunullah Habib stated that, “Today, the world is facing chaos because of attempts by Muslim extremists to implement elements of *fiqh* [Islamic jurisprudence] that are no longer compatible with 21st century reality. The catastrophic violence and human misery that result from these attempts are most visibly on display in the Middle East but threaten the entire world, presenting each of us with a profound moral choice: shall we remain silent or follow the example of the noble prophets in confronting tyranny?”

“The [*Nusantara Manifesto*](#) provides us with a framework to frankly acknowledge and directly address these vital issues,” said Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Secretary of the NU Supreme Council. “[I]t analyzes how modern political, socio-cultural, economic and technological reality no longer corresponds to that of the Middle Ages, when classical *fiqh* emerged. Adapting to these profound changes will enable Muslims to live in harmony with others and thrive by contributing to the emergence of a truly global civilization.”

Delivering an address entitled “Do We Have the Courage to Reinterpret the Qur’an?” KH. Ahmad Nadhif Mujib—a prominent *muballigh*, or itinerant preacher—argued that “*fiqh* is the product of *ijtihad* [independent legal reasoning] and thus relative [subject to change], not Absolute or worth dying for (*harga mati*).” Kyai Mujib deliberately employed the term *harga mati*, which in Indonesian parlance generally refers to the Republic of Indonesia as a multi-religious and pluralistic nation state, in defense of which NU members are, by and large, prepared to sacrifice their lives. “The bridge between heaven and earth is open [not closed and confined to interpretations from the past],” said Kyai Mujib, quoting a document submitted to the forum by KH. Abdul Ghofur Maemun, Supervisor of Bahtsul Masa’il PBNU—the division of the NU Central Board that is responsible for examining issues related to Islamic law.

KH. Abu Yazid Bustomi—Deputy General Secretary of Rijalul Ansor—spoke of the need for Muslims to escape “religious tyranny, the tyranny of dogma, the tyranny of classical *fiqh* and the tyranny of thinking that we have the most correct understanding of religious truth... The only solution to the crisis facing Muslim communities worldwide is to construct a global *fiqh* that reflects our present reality. We [Nahdlatul Ulama theologians] have the requisite ability, courage and authority to conduct *ijtihad*!!!”

The forum concluded with a prayer by revered NU theologian KH. A. Mustofa Bisri—former Chairman of the NU Supreme Council and current Bayt ar-Rahmah Chairman—who issued each of the assembled scholars an *ijazah* (license) to interpret the *Fatihah*, or opening chapter of the Qur’an, which is said to contain within it the essence of the entire scripture.

Bayt ar-Rahmah li ad-Da’wa al-Islamiyah Rahmatan li al-‘Alamin

info@baytarrahmah.org • www.baytarrahmah.org