

Indonesia's largest Muslim group joins battle against radical Islam

Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation, Nahdatul Ulama (NU), has joined the global battle against radical ideology, producing a documentary film to draw the line between moderate and radical Islam.

By Sujadi Siswo | Posted 10 Dec 2015 19:38 | Updated 10 Dec 2015 21:26



JAKARTA: Never in its 90-year history has the Nahdatul Ulama (NU) come out so forcefully to explain the brand of Islam it propagates in Indonesia.

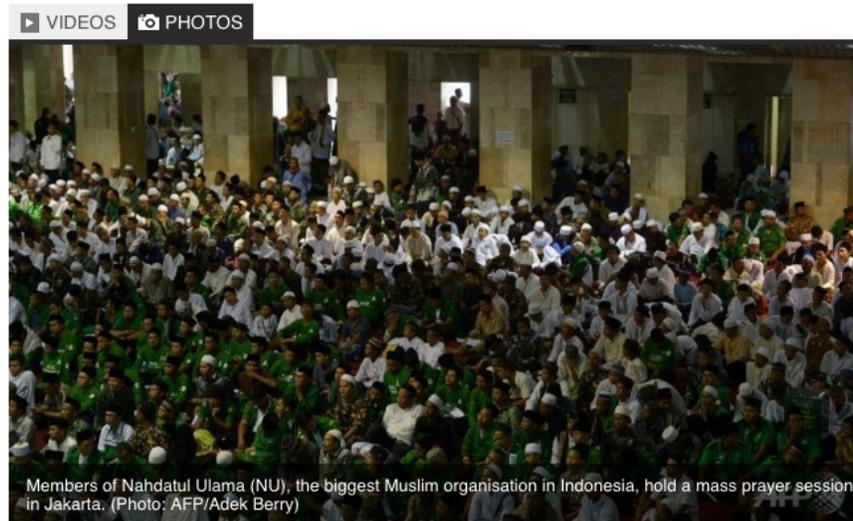
In its 90-minute documentary film *The Divine Grace of Islam Nusantara*, NU explains how Islam has spread in the archipelago through local wisdom and culture.

And the teachings of the nine saints in mainland Java - popularly known as Wali Songo - is at the heart of this Islamic tradition that promotes peace and tolerance.

NU wants to promote this practice here, as radicalism takes root.

“Our primary target is our common Muslim people, because we know they need a bright line. They need this bright line that separates radical Islam from the true Islam,” said Yahya Cholil Staqul, NU secretary general. “What we need is a consensus among the societies - societal consensus - that can marginalise those radical ideologies.”

Several global organisations who supported the film's production have pooled their resources to counter the extremism being spread through popular media.



“This film was created to use technology in order to function as a loudspeaker and to easily propagate the traditional teachings of Islam that is a characteristic of not only Nusantara, or Indonesian Islam, but also the characteristics of the vast majority of Muslim population throughout the world,” said C Holland Taylor, chairman and CEO of LibForAll Foundation.

“Other organisations must also start to engage this ideological battle,” said Noor Huda Ismail, director of the Institute for International Peace-building. “Since 2002, we’ve seen a silent majority. We let the fringe minority of Muslim radicals grab the microphone and dictate the discourse.”

2002 was the year the Bali bombings shook Indonesia, and the country realised it was home to regional terror network Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).

Jemaah Islamiyah has been decimated structurally, but its teachings and spirit are far from dead. While the JI was more of a regional phenomenon, Indonesia is now dealing with the threat and global appeal of Islamic State.

By latest estimates, 700 Indonesians have joined IS in Syria and Iraq - the largest contingent of foreign fighters from Asia. What is more worrying is that more than 160 of them are back in Indonesia.

As the face of moderate Islam in Indonesia, NU wants a bigger part in the ideological battle.

“Nahdatul Uama has already set in motion to build a cooperation with the University of Vienna in Austria to produce counter-narratives to radical Islamic ideologies,” said Yahya Cholil Staqful

Home to the world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia can play an important role for moderate Muslims looking for good role models, as they fight the spread of radical ideas.

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/indonesia-s-largest/2336104.html>