

Islam and Nationalism Inseparable

May 10, 2016 07:41 GMT+7

JAKARTA, KOMPAS — Islam and nationalism are two sides of the same coin. Each is inseparable from the other. Both are key to the development of a nation and a solution to all conflicts currently occurring in many Islamic countries.



KOMPAS/WISNU WIDIANTORO

Vice President Jusuf Kalla (left) and Islamic figures (from left to right) IZOMIL chairman Imam Aziz, Nahdlatul Ulama Faction (PBNU) chief KH Said Aqil Siraj, PBNU rais aam (supreme leader) KH Maruh Amin attend the opening of International Summit of Moderate Islam in Jakarta on May 9. The event that facilitates the meeting of ulemas from different countries is expected to contribute to solving conflict between Islamic states and aid the return to a peaceful Islam.

This kind of attitude, according to Nahdlatul Ulama chairman KH Said Aqil Siroj, is already understood by the clerics in Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. They have successfully established the connection between religious principles and the state. This is the difference between Islam in Indonesia and in Middle Eastern countries.

"The unity between Islam and nationalism does not exist in the Middle East countries, which are embroiled in continuous conflicts. Millions have died because of wars. For what? For whom?" Said Aqil said in his opening speech of the International Summit of the Moderate Islamic Leaders (Isomil) at the Jakarta Convention Center on Monday (9/5/2016).

The event, which was officially opened by Vice President Jusuf Kalla and will continue until today, was attended by 400 representatives of many countries of the Middle East, Europe, the Americas, Asia and Australia, as well as a number of Islamic boarding schools across Indonesia.

The opening of Isomil, which was held under the theme of "Islam Nusantara: Inspiration for World's Cultures", was also attended by former president Megawati Soekarnoputri and several ministers of the Working Cabinet, including Religious Affairs Minister Lukman Hakim Saifuddin and Coordinating Human and Culture Development Minister Puan Maharani.

Indonesia as an example

In his opening speech, Kalla said that Indonesia should be thankful that it did not face the same problems as conflict-ridden Middle Eastern countries. He said that he hoped Indonesia could set an example for other countries by campaigning for tolerance and respect between religious adherents.

"We may not be able to unite every single thing. However, how we see our differences as a blessing for us all and complementing each of us in our lives, this is our collective hope," Kalla said.

Isomil organizing committee members Maksum Mahfudz and Imam Aziz explained that the event, which was held for the first time this year, aimed to refresh Islam's mission and encourage policymakers to take concrete steps to develop a peaceful and just civilization. The event also discussed a number of issues, especially tackling the alarming rise of religious terrorism and radicalism.

Jordanian cleric Hamdi M Murad said that he hoped the conference would produce a declaration that asked all Muslims everywhere to promote a peaceful face of Islam. "This is the true Islam. Islam that is peaceful and supports a progressive civilization," he said.

Nahdlatul Ulama senior cleric KH Yahya C Staquf said that the world's moderate Muslims should be more actively promoting moderate Islam. "This is what all Islamic leaders must continue to do: promoting a moderate form of Islam," he said.

A similar sentiment was voiced by C Holland Taylor, the director of Bayt Rahmah in California, the US. He said that he hoped moderate Muslims would continue promoting a friendly Islam such as that in Indonesia. He added that many Americans and Europeans who do not understand Islam well had their image of the religion shaped by terrorist events conducted by groups abusing the name of Islam.

"The violent groups even quote Quranic verses and hadith in improper ways. This is what people often see," Taylor said.

Nahdlatul Ulama *rais aam* (supreme leader) Ma'ruf Amin said in his opening speech, which he delivered in Arabic, that there were two types of extremism in the interpretation of Islamic teachings today. He reminded the audience that both types were equally dangerous and should never be followed.

First is the hardliners that interpret religious teachings in rigid ways. They are the ones who are extremely fixated on a single understanding in determining what is *halal* (allowed)

or *haram* (forbidden). They read the laws textually without any comparison to other opinions or interpretations. They extend the scope of haram laws and ignore the original goal of why the law was established in the first place, or *maqashid syariah*.

"They only bring difficulty to the people and they make hard what Allah wants to make easy. They confine things that Islam wants to make broad and they do not understand simplicity. They think that the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is by default antagonistic, a battle, instead of living side-by-side peacefully," he said.

The second group is the first's exact opposite. They oversimplify things too much. They think that there is no certainty in Islam as everything can always be reviewed and reassessed. "In their hands, religion becomes soft and weak and can be molded to their liking," he said.

<http://print.kompas.com/baca/2016/05/10/Islam-and-Nationalism-Inseparable>