

## Indonesia: Islamic moderates hold summit to promote peace in the Middle East



(Vatican Radio) In a joint effort to promote understanding of Islamic teachings and the spread of moderate views, some 500 moderate Muslim leaders from 70 countries held a conference in Jakarta, sponsored by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest moderate Islamic organization.

The event followed the summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held in Istanbul a few weeks ago. According to the organisers, Indonesia – the world's most populous Muslim-majority country – must take a leading role in solving conflicts caused by poor interpretations of the Qur'an, a fact that underlies violence in the Middle East, and attacks in Paris, Brussels, Ankara and Lahore.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo was supposed to open the summit, but Vice President Jusuf Kalla took his place. For the VP, all moderate Islamic nations must promote peace in Islamic societies, as well as respect for non-Muslim communities.

Noting Kalla's concerns, NU President Kiai Hajj Said Agil Siroj said that Muslim leaders found themselves at odds with each other on a number of issues at the OIC summit. Nevertheless, the

NU has been working for years to promote a moderate version of Islam at the national and international levels, especially in the educational and social fields, including health-care.

In 2001, it set up a similarly moderate organisation in Afghanistan, which now has branches in 22 provinces. “Moderate Afghan leaders are concerned about and reject religious radicalism,” said ISOMIL coordinator Juri Ardiantoro. On 17 January, 2016, the Sunni organisation held an interfaith rally with Catholic participation in the Indonesian capital to say no to extremism.

Almost four million students attend NU’s 23,000 boarding schools and educational centres. Its governing principle is that of Nusantara (referring to a group of islands, an archipelago) Islam, which signifies promoting an Islam of the Majority of Indonesians who hold moderate ideas of religious tolerance. At its 33rd congress last year, NU made this a priority.

In response to President Joko Widodo’s call on NU leaders to fight Islamist propaganda at home, NU leader Agil Siroj said that his organisation is doing this through a nationwide programme called ‘Nusantara Islam Expedition’ and a joint effort with the government’s anti-terrorism agency.

This entails plans to re-radicalise at least 700 Indonesian veterans from the Syrian civil war where they fought on the side of the Islamic State group.

(Source: AsiaNews)

[http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/05/12/indonesia\\_islamic\\_moderates\\_hold\\_summit\\_for\\_peace\\_in\\_me/1229379](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/05/12/indonesia_islamic_moderates_hold_summit_for_peace_in_me/1229379)