

## UGM to promote NU, Muhammadiyah for Nobel Peace Prize

Bambang Muryanto | Yogyakarta | Thu, January 24, 2019



A decoration with scientist Alfred Nobel is pictured ahead of the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony at the Stockholm Concert Hall on December 10, 2017 in Stockholm, Sweden. (AFP/Jonathan Nackstrand)

Gajah Mada University (UGM) plans to nominate Indonesia's two biggest Muslim organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), to share the Nobel Peace Prize, citing their contributions to democratic developments in the country with the world's largest Muslim population.

The plan was revealed recently by UGM's Center for Security and Peace Studies (PSKP) director M. Najib Azca during last week's launch of the book *Dua Menyemai Damai, Peran dan*

*Kontribusi Muhammadiyah dan Nahdlatul Ulama dalam Perdamaian dan Demokrasi (Two Peacemakers, the Role and Contributions of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama in Peace and Democracy)*, which was written by the PSKP's researcher team.

“The PSKP UGM is studying the plan. UGM is to make the decision and send the nomination to the Nobel Peace Prize committee in Norway,” he said.

Despite gloomy media reports about the growing clout of hardline Islam in the country, the university believed mainstream Muslims in Indonesia were, like Muhammadiyah and NU, tolerant and democratic.

UGM, Najib said, wanted to spotlight the profile of Indonesian Islam on the international stage. “Islam in Indonesia is democratic, civilized and peaceful. It's different from Islam in other countries such as Iraq or Afghanistan that are continuously marred by conflicts,” he said.

Muhammadiyah was established by Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta in 1912, while NU was created in Surabaya, East Java, in 1926 by Hasyim Asy'ari.

Anthropologist Robert W. Hefner of Boston University, who has conducted extensive research on Islam in Indonesia, said he had sent a letter to the Nobel Peace Prize committee in Norway to nominate the two organizations.

“I sent the letter on Jan. 4 and it has been received,” he said.

He added that there had been intensive and extensive discussions on the global level about the role of Muhammadiyah and NU in creating a democratic and peaceful Muslim community in Indonesia.

Speaking in a discussion about the book, Najib said Muhammadiyah and NU deserved to share the Nobel Peace Prize because of their important role in the democratic transition since 1998.

“Muhammadiyah and NU are the pillars of democracy in seeding positive peace through various activities such as in the fields of education, empowerment of the economy, philanthropy, disaster and health,” Najib said.

Muhammadiyah, he added, was also active in facilitating peaceful reconciliation in the aftermath of conflicts in Poso and Ambon. It provides education facilities in the eastern parts of Indonesia, whose majority populations are not Muslim.

Meanwhile NU, through then-president Abdurrahman Wahid, played a big role in creating peace in Aceh and Papua. NU has many thoughts about gender equality, the prevention of radicalism and Islam Nusantara (Islam that is Indonesia specific).

NU's Barisan Serba Guna paramilitary arm is also active in protecting minority groups.

Hefner said Muhammadiyah and NU played a crucial role in educating people so that the idea of

democracy and Indonesian nationality would be accepted by all parties.

“Democracy cannot work only by depending on a formal approach. It needs socialization and to plant norms,” Hefner said.

Hefner claimed that Muhammadiyah and NU have succeeded in educating Muslims to consider democracy acceptable.

“Islamic education reform that other Islamic countries are dreaming of has been conducted in Indonesia since a long time ago, especially by Muhammadiyah,” he said.

Meanwhile, UGM professor and political expert Mochtar Mas’oed said Muhammadiyah and NU were more appropriately called “gentle civilizers” rather than “peace builders”.

“If they are called peace builders, it would be difficult for the readers to find the empirical data,” Mochtar said, expressing agreement with Hefner who emphasized the success of the two Muslim organizations in creating a public sense of ethics.

However, Mochtar questioned the ability of the two organizations to deal with the rightwing populism that has fostered a violent politicization of Islam in Indonesia.

“The perpetrators are a minority, but a well-organized minority can always outmaneuver an unorganized majority,” he said.

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/01/24/ugm-to-promote-nu-muhammadiyah-for-nobel-peace-prize.html>