

Report: Indonesian Leader Primed to Promote ‘Humanitarian Islam’



By [THOMAS D. WILLIAMS, PH.D.](#) | 1 Feb 2022

The newly elected leader of the world’s largest Islamic organization is committed to promoting a moderate form of Islam and now has the potential global voice to do it, asserts a report from the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies.

Yahya Cholil Staqf (shown above with then-US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo), cofounder of the global movement “Humanitarian Islam,” was recently elected chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), an organization that boasts a membership of some 100 million Indonesian Muslims.

According to Alexander R. Arifianto, a research fellow with the Indonesia Programme, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Staquf is uniquely **equipped** to turn NU “into a global voice on religious moderation” that can have an impact well beyond Indonesia’s borders.

Arifianto notes that Staquf’s previous role at NU was to promote Islam Nusantara (East Indies Islam), a body of teachings espousing “Islamic moderation and toleration towards non-Islamic cultures and religious traditions,” described as an “antidote” to Islamist radicalism.

Staquf partnered with Holland Taylor to found the Bayt ar-Rahmah (“House of Mercy”) Foundation, which in turn launched the “humanitarian Islam” movement, seeking “to recontextualize the teachings of orthodox, authoritative Islam” by reconciling it with “the reality of contemporary civilization, whose context and conditions differ significantly from those in which classical Islamic law emerged.”

“Humanitarian Islam” aims to reform “obsolete tenets of Islamic orthodoxy” that enjoin religious hatred, supremacy, and violence, by restoring *rahmah* (universal love and compassion) to its rightful place as the primary message of Islam, the group’s **website** declares.

Staquf now intends to bring the wisdom and spiritual authority of Islam Nusantara to the world stage, “where a harsh, repressive and all-too-often violent understanding of Islam has predominated for decades,” it adds.

By recontextualizing the teaching of orthodox, authoritative Islam, Humanitarian Islam aims to challenge the “problematic tenets of Islamic orthodoxy” that lead to radicalism and terrorism, it declares.

The end game of Humanitarian Islam is “to bring about a world in which Islam — and Muslims — are truly beneficent and contribute to the well-being of all humanity” and where there can be “respect for equal rights and dignity of every human being.”

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