



## 2015\_11\_26\_Ansor Congress and Film Launch

### “From Indonesia, a Muslim Challenge to the Ideology of the Islamic State”

YOGYAKARTA, Indonesia — On the morning of November 26, 2015, [the 15<sup>th</sup> National Congress](#) of the world’s largest Muslim youth organization, GP Ansor (established 1934), opened with the screening of a film ([The Divine Grace of East Indies Islam](#)) that the [New York Times](#) hailed as “a relentless religious repudiation of the Islamic State and the opening salvo in a global campaign by the world’s largest Muslim group to challenge the ideology of the Islamic State head-on.”

The leadership of Ansor is closely aligned with the spiritual wing of its parent organization, the Nahdlatul Ulama (est. 1926). Haji Yaqut Cholil Qoumas—a member of Indonesia’s parliament and nephew of Kyai Haji A. Mustofa Bisri, former chairman of the NU Supreme Council—was elected Chairman of GP Ansor for the 2015 – 2020 term. Under his leadership, Ansor is expected to work closely with the Nahdlatul Ulama and Bayt ar-Rahmah in addressing the threat posed by Islamist extremism.

The Ansor Congress was held at PP Pandanaran, one of the oldest and most respected madrasahs in Muslim Southeast Asia. Over 6,000 members of Ansor and its militia, Banser, gathered from nearly every province and regency in Indonesia to attend the event, which was addressed by Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla; Sri Sultan Hamengkubono X, the Governor of Yogyakarta; Dr. Syafii Maarif, former Chairman of the Muhammadiyah Central Board; and Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Secretary of the Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council and the elder brother of H. Yaqut Cholil Qoumas.

As outgoing Ansor Chairman Nusron Wahid told the assembled delegates, “It is the religious duty of Muslims, and above all, that of the NU and Ansor, to marginalize and defeat this extremist movement [ISIS].” In his acceptance address, the newly-elected Chairman of Ansor said, “Islam Nusantara (East Indies Islam) is at the very heart of our understanding of Islam, and our NU identity, as traditional Sunni Muslims. I believe you gentlemen are capable of safeguarding the universal love and compassion, and East Indies culture, that lies at the heart of our Islam.”

“Frankly, I am full of doubt concerning the development of Islam in Arab nations... With their countries being destroyed like this, they need to learn from Indonesia,” Syafii Maarif declared, to prolonged applause from thousands of Ansor delegates.

KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf conveyed the essence of the NU’s worldview, and its relationship with those of other faiths and cultures, when he described Islam Nusantara as “Islam that does not arrive seeking to conquer anyone. Islam that does not come to destroy like those (extremists) do. But rather, Islam that contributes to developing a better civilization for ALL humanity, for as our Prophet (saw.) said: ‘I was sent for no purpose other than to perfect noble character and morality.’ This is jihad to BUILD, not destroy, civilization.”