



2016_05_12_Global Unity Forum and Ansor Declaration

Nahdlatul Ulama Youth Movement Hosts Global Unity Forum Urges Reform of Classical Islamic Law

JAKARTA, INDONESIA: On May 12, 2016, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish leaders gathered to attend a Global Unity Forum co-sponsored by the world's largest Muslim youth organization, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, and Bayt ar-Rahmah. At the Forum's conclusion, GP Ansor issued a [3-page declaration](#) that includes "The GP Ansor Call... for an end to conflict in the name of religion, and for qualified *ulama* (Muslim religious scholars) to carefully examine and address those elements of *fiqh* (classical Islamic law) that encourage segregation, discrimination and/or violence towards those perceived to be 'non-Muslim.'"

The day-long event featured expert presentations and detailed discussion of the historic relationship between Muslims, classical Islamic law and those who adhere to other faiths. Speakers included H. Yaqut C. Qoumas, Chairman of GP Ansor; KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Secretary of the Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council; Abdul Aziz Wahid, Chairman of the Jakarta chapter of Ansor; [Dr. Samuel Tadros](#), an Egyptian Copt and resident scholar at the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom; Rabbi Mordechai Avtzon, Director of Chabad Hong Kong and China; and Virginia Gray Henry, Director of the inter-faith publishing house Fons Vitae.

As [KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf](#) explained in his opening address, the Global Unity Forum was held as a direct follow up to the [International Summit of Moderate Islamic Leaders](#) (ISOMIL) and the [Nahdlatul Ulama Declaration](#), which was promulgated on May 10, 2016. "In its declaration, the NU firmly and honestly identified the salient factors most responsible for the emergence of this global crisis—i.e., factors rooted within specific elements of Islam itself.... [The] Forum convened today—by GP Ansor and the Nahdlatul Ulama—represents a decisive "first step" that demonstrates the NU is moving forward to implement its strategy. We shall not stop halfway nor abandon this path before we have reached our goal. We shall not return home [from the field of battle] until victory is in our hands."

As the public declaration issued at the Global Unity Forum states: "If we wish to end the primordial cycle of violence in the name of religion, we must acknowledge that many orthodox religious traditions encourage their adherents to practice self-segregation and, often, to discriminate against others. Such teachings are deeply embedded within classical Islamic law (*fiqh*) itself... We cannot shield Muslim youth from the siren call of 'violent extremism' without altering our very perception of religion itself, and the obligations that it imposes upon us."

According to senior NU and Ansor leaders, the declaration issued at the Global Unity Forum provides the requisite theological grounds to summon an international gathering of Muslim scholars (*bahtsul masa'il*), whose deliberations are expected to establish a road map for the reform of classical Islamic law, in order to meet the needs and circumstances of Muslims living in the 21st century.