



2017_03_30_Humanitarian Islam

**World's Largest Muslim Organization Launches Global Effort
to Recontextualize (i.e., Reform) Classical Islamic Law**

JAKARTA, Indonesia: On March 30th, 2017, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor (the Nahdlatul Ulama Young Adults Movement) announced the launch of a concerted effort to promote Humanitarian Islam (*al-islam li al-insaniyyah*), by developing and operationalizing a global strategy to recontextualize the teachings of orthodox, authoritative Islam and thereby reconcile certain problematic elements of classical Islamic law (*fiqh*, aka *shari'ah*) with the reality of contemporary civilization, whose context and conditions differ significantly from those in which classical Islamic law emerged.

The elements in question include those portions of *fiqh* that address relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, the structure of governance and the proper aims and conduct of warfare. It is precisely these elements that are often employed by terrorists to justify their actions, and by those who seek to use Islam for political purposes, fostering a sense of grievance and alienation from the modern world.

Speakers included H. Yaqut Qoumas, Chairman of GP Ansor; KH. Said Aqil Siradj, Chairman of the NU Executive Board; KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Secretary of the NU Supreme Council; C. Holland Taylor, CEO of LibForAll Foundation and Deputy Chairman of [Bayt ar-Rahmah](#); Alissa Wahid, the daughter of Indonesia's fourth president, [H.E. KH. Abdurrahman Wahid](#); and Puti Guntur Soekarno, granddaughter of Indonesia's first president. Numerous diplomats attended the event, at which Ms. Wahid and Ms. Soekarno presented Ansor with a painting that [vividly illustrates](#) why the world's largest Muslim-majority nation and democracy was established as a multi-religious/pluralistic state, with a constitutional guarantee of equal rights for all its citizens.

Ansor's initiative represents a concrete step to implement the 5-year Work Program adopted at its November 2015 National Congress, and follows the May 2016 [Global Unity Forum](#), at which Ansor called "for an end to conflict in the name of religion, and for qualified *ulama* (religious scholars) to carefully examine and address those elements of *fiqh* that encourage segregation, discrimination and/or violence towards those perceived to be 'non-Muslim.'" Ansor's initiative is also a response to the 2016 International Summit of Moderate Islamic Leaders (ISOMIL) [Nahdlatul Ulama Declaration](#), which identified "specific modes of interpreting Islam as [the most significant factor](#) causing the spread of religious extremism among Muslims" (point 8) and committed the NU "to consolidate the global *ahlussunnah wal jamaah* (Sunni Muslim) community, in order to bring about a world in which Islam, and Muslims, are truly beneficent and contribute to the well-being of all humanity" (point 16).

At the March 30th event, Ansor Chairman H. Yaqut Qoumas appointed [KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf](#) as the organization's Emissary to the Islamic World, and [C. Holland Taylor](#) as Emissary to the United Nations, Americas and Europe. He described their mission as "developing an international network that will lead to the emergence of a global movement dedicated to the well-being of humanity as a whole, inspired by Humanitarian Islam." The Chairman also said that Ansor will convene an international *bahtsul masa'il*, or gathering of qualified religious scholars, in May of 2017, to formulate a road map leading to the recontextualization (i.e., reform) of Islamic teachings.

"We firmly believe that religion should be a source of universal love and compassion—flexible and responsive to the needs of humanity in every time and place. Our purpose is simply to realign certain elements of Islamic teaching with the primary message, and purpose, of the Prophet himself (pbuh)" said the Ansor Chairman, when announcing this historic development.