



2019_09_16_Chairman of Indonesia's Largest Islamic Political Party Champions Humanitarian Islam in the UK

Deputy Speaker of Indonesia's Parliament Advises UK Government Officials on Issues Related to Islam, Security and Migration

LONDON, United Kingdom: On September 16, 2019, H. Muhaimin Iskandar—Deputy Speaker of Indonesia's upper legislative assembly (MPR) and General Chairman of its largest Islamic-based political party (PKB)—arrived in London for private talks with key policymakers within the administration of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Mr. Iskandar, whose political party is rooted in Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the world's largest Muslim organization, was accompanied by C. Holland Taylor, who serves as Emissary for the UN, Americas and Europe for Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, NU's 5-million-member young adults movement. Thomas Dinham—Director of Strategic Outreach for [Bayt ar-Rahmah](#), a U.S.-based nonprofit headed by Mr. Taylor and Nahdlatul Ulama's spiritual leaders—also attended discussions.

The wide-ranging talks, hosted by influential think tank Policy Exchange at its headquarters adjacent to the Palace of Westminster, explored enhanced cooperation between the United Kingdom and the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy in numerous areas, including bilateral diplomatic relations, trade, security and geopolitics. Nahdlatul Ulama's spiritual leaders have begun to [engage in the UK](#) at a decisive moment in the country's recent political history, as it searches for new partners after its exit from the European Union ("Brexit") and forges relations with Southeast Asia's largest economy.

As Indonesia's official news agency, *Antara*, reported:

Over the past year, key political parties in Europe have come to view Nahdlatul Ulama and PKB as essential partners, for they possess the skills and theological authority required to effectively address a complex nexus of security threats linked to Islam, terrorism and migration.

Gus AMI (Muhaimin Iskandar) stated that "NU's and PKB's engagement in Europe is designed to operationalize the [Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Declaration on Humanitarian Islam](#) road map, by fostering the emergence of the societal consensus required to block the political weaponization of Islam."

Detik news service—one of Indonesia's most popular websites—quoted the PKB Chairman as saying:

"It is vital that Muslims live harmoniously with other members of our global community. This requires the recontextualization (i.e., reform) of certain religious views that hinder the integration of Muslims living in non-Muslim societies. It also requires a transformation of the prevailing Muslim mindset..."

“Nahdlatul Ulama already functions as the primary locomotive for the recontextualization and transformation of Islamic thought.

“Because this effort cannot be divorced from politics, the NU and President Abdurrahman Wahid established PKB as their political vehicle,” said Gus AMI in a written statement released on Tuesday, 17 September 2019.

“Based on theological analysis conducted by NU scholars, we have identified specific Islamic views that need to change, including the way Muslims generally view their relations with non-Muslims. [According to Nahdlatul Ulama,] it is impermissible to harbor or propagate enmity towards others on the basis of religious identity.

“NU also rejects the idea that it is a religious obligation for Muslims to establish a Caliphate, and has endowed the nation state with theological legitimacy. The same is true of laws derived through modern democratic processes. The NU views such laws as legitimate, and does not regard calls to implement ‘*shariah*’ as a valid rationale for disregarding the laws, and authority, of the modern nation state.

“With regard to various religious conflicts raging worldwide, Nahdlatul Ulama is committed to strive for peace and will not blindly involve itself in partisan conflicts in the name of defending fellow Muslims.”

According to Gus AMI, PKB opposes all attempts to employ Islam as a political weapon. Rather, PKB is committed to fostering rational discourse as part of its strategy to counter and ultimately eradicate identity politics [which, within a Muslim context, is closely linked to Islamic supremacism].

In line with these views, PKB urges the people of Europe, and particularly its political elites, to address Islam-related issues of immigration and security in a realistic and objective manner—neither refusing to acknowledge problems that truly exist, nor irresponsibly awakening primordial emotions and prejudices.

On November 27, 2018 PKB joined the world’s largest political network, Centrist Democrat International (IDC – CDI), whose European affiliate is EPP (the European People’s Party). On April 10, 2019, the Executive Committee of IDC – CDI unanimously adopted a [resolution](#) submitted by PKB, which endorsed the [Humanitarian Islam agenda](#) and its [mission](#) to foster “the emergence of a global civilization founded upon respect for the equal rights and dignity of every human being.”

Nahdlatul Ulama, PKB and Gerakan Pemuda Ansor played a key role in the 2019 re-election of Indonesian President Joko Widodo, whose opponents included a wide array of extremist organizations and political opportunists eager to weaponize Islam in their struggle for power.

As the results of Indonesia’s 2019 legislative and presidential elections [demonstrated](#), the Nahdlatul Ulama’s spiritual leadership and its mass following remain crucial factors in preserving Indonesia’s centuries-old tradition of religious pluralism and tolerance, despite continuous assault by transnational Islamist movements, whose ideology and financial backing originated historically in the Middle East.

Following their meeting at Policy Exchange, Mr. Iskandar joined other members of Indonesia’s legislature to participate in a series of events arranged by the Indonesian Embassy to the UK, while Mr. Taylor and Mr. Dinham visited 10 Downing Street to hold a confidential discussion with close advisors to Prime Minister Boris Johnson.