



2019_11_21_Top EU Figures Welcome Leaders of the Humanitarian Islam Movement to Political Summit in Zagreb

A “Values-driven” Alliance to Promote Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights, and Defend a Rules-based International Order from Authoritarian Threats

ZAGREB, Croatia: On 20 and 21 November, 2019, leaders of the global Humanitarian Islam movement joined nearly 2,500 members of Europe’s largest and most successful political group—the European People’s Party (EPP)—who gathered in the Western Balkans nation of Croatia to elect new leaders for the 2019 to 2022 period, and to discuss EPP priorities for the new Parliamentary term in Brussels.

Senior Indonesian political and religious figures attended the European People’s Party Congress as guests of EPP Secretary General Antonio López-Istúriz White. Their participation signifies an unexpected and potentially momentous geopolitical development, as European and Indonesian leaders have begun to [articulate](#), and [adopt](#), key elements of a shared humanitarian agenda rooted in universal values, as well as spiritual and philosophical principles derived from the Christian and Islamic faith traditions.

This “values-driven” alliance between Indonesian and European political parties—facilitated by leaders of the Humanitarian Islam movement and prominent statesmen from across the continent—has the potential to significantly expand political, economic, cultural, religious and security cooperation between the world’s largest Muslim-majority democracy, the EU and its Member States. In addition, members of this alliance explicitly seek to “foster the emergence of a global consensus regarding key ethics and values that should guide the exercise of power, so that the geopolitical landscape of the 21st century may be characterized by a truly just and harmonious world order founded upon respect for the equal rights and dignity of every human being.” (*CDI Resolution on ethics and values that should guide the exercise of power*, dated October 11, 2019)

The Congress, held just six weeks prior to Croatia assuming the Presidency of the European Council on 1 January 2020, and one week before the newly selected European Commission takes office on 1 December, was covered by close to 500 journalists, comprising nearly every major international news media outlet, and was viewed as orchestrating the future direction, policies and key personnel of the European Union, the most prosperous and successful trading bloc on earth.

Members of the Humanitarian Islam delegation included KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Secretary of the world’s largest Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU); H. Muhaimin Iskandar, the Chairman of Indonesia’s largest Islamic political party, PKB, and Deputy Speaker of Indonesia’s national legislature; Reza Faisol, PKB Deputy Chairman; and C. Holland Taylor, co-founder of the Humanitarian Islam movement, who serves as an international emissary for the NU’s 5-million-member young adults movement, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor.

In November of 2018, PKB joined Centrist Democrat International (CDI), the world's most extensive political network, which has over 100 affiliated parties in more than 70 nations, including the European People's Party.

Delegates from over 40 countries attended the Congress, including the newly appointed President and various members of the European Commission (the European Union's executive branch); the President of the European Council, which defines the EU's overall political direction and priorities; many of the EPP's 182 Members of the European Parliament; and the leaders of numerous European states, including Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, the prime ministers of Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Moldova, Norway and Romania, and the presidents of Croatia, Cyprus and Switzerland.

The Humanitarian Islam movement's engagement with prominent European political partners is part of a long-term strategy to address specific policy areas that are vitally important to the future of the European Union, Indonesia and the world at large. These include the nexus of [security threats](#) linked to Islam, [terrorism](#) and migration in Europe, and the global rise of illiberal and autocratic "civilizationalist" regimes that threaten humanitarian values—including the rights of ethnic and religious minorities—by undermining the post-WWII international order founded upon the principles articulated in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

Within Europe itself, the Humanitarian Islam movement seeks to build the societal consensus necessary to block the [political weaponization of Islam](#), which is fueling the re-emergence of supremacist ethno-religious identities that many Europeans pride themselves on having left behind, but which now once again threaten European stability, social harmony and the respect for human rights embraced by its political mainstream.

Outgoing EPP President Joseph Daul noted that in 2019, the European People's Party secured the appointment of women to head two of the foremost institutions within the EU, viz., the President of the European Commission (Ursula von der Leyen of Germany) and the President of the European Central Bank (Christine Lagarde of France, who is also an EPP politician).

Condemning the rise of xenophobic movements in Europe, and authoritarian civilizationalist regimes worldwide, Mr. Daul stated, "We do not fan the flames of fear and hatred" and warned Congress participants that "We are trapped between the imperial ambitions of Russia and China."

President of the European Council and newly elected President of the EPP, Donald Tusk, echoed these sentiments in a widely reported speech in which he stated:

"I deeply believe that only those who want and are able to give people a feeling of safety and security, preserving at the same time their freedoms and rights, have a mandate to run for power. Under no circumstances can we give away the sphere of security and order to political populists, manipulators and autocrats, who lead people to believe that freedom cannot be reconciled with security. That protecting our borders and territory cannot be reconciled with liberal democracy, and an effective governance with the rule of law."

**Speech by EPP Secretary General Antonio López-Istúriz White,
delivered in Zagreb on 21 November, 2019**

Dear President Tusk, dziękuję bardzo [thank you very much]. You know that we are starting to learn Polish now in EPP. [Mr. Istúriz thanks former EPP President Joseph Daul in French and Pablo Casado, President of the Spanish Partido Popular, in Spanish]. And to all of you, thank you for entrusting in me the continuity of EPP and thanks to everybody who participated yesterday and today in the vote. One thing that I am truly proud of about this party is that we are not only defending democracy but also we practice it, different from socialists, renaissancists under Macron, and others.

Dear friends, for many years I have been hearing people try to describe me. Some people say that I am tough, others say that I am loyal, some people even love to call me General Secretary instead of Secretary General. I would like to tell you all that I agree with all the descriptions, and that the tough Tono, the loyal Tono has always been at your service. It does not matter if you come from the East, the West, North, South, if you come from a small or a big country, you know that this tough and loyal politician has always been and will remain at the service of EPP.

If any of you have sometimes felt that I was maybe too aggressive on some occasions, believe me I have done it because I have put the interests of the EPP always before any particular. This is my family, and I will do whatever it takes to take care of each of you. I am very loyal to my job description, the guarantee of the unity of the party and the success of all of you to make the EPP the bridge between the Brussels bubble and your national realities, and to help you win your political battles back home.

Dear friends, Brussels is becoming more political day by day. Acting like bureaucrats will not take us anywhere. We are under the attack of Monsieur Macron on one side and the extreme right on the other side. Be careful with them, they might look tempting sometimes, but you know as well as I that these are failing solutions for the challenges to the European Union. Macron, like many others, must truly understand that the EPP is a true party of parties. He cannot deal with us the way he deals with his potpourri, opportunistic renaissancist subjects.

Dear friends, the European People's Party has not been winning every European election since 1999 by accident. Ours is a party of balance. In Europe today, we have those who want to close the doors to immigrants no matter what their situation is, and there are those who want to bring everybody in without any criteria. We have those who cross the Atlantic by boat because they do not want to feel guilty for taking planes and those who run obsolete industries and refuse to introduce modern environmental standards. We have those who have denied the EU the capacity to protect itself with an army of its own, and those who want to destroy NATO. In this messy pool of polarized views, we are the party that brings a reasonable perspective [and] reasonable solutions. I am not at all exaggerating when I say that we are the only balanced and reasonable political force in Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Socialists soon will disappear, and will be absorbed by the Greens. Meanwhile, the Liberals will be absorbed by Macron. The ECR [European Conservatives and Reformists] will self-destruct from the Brexit they created, and the extreme left and the extreme right will destroy themselves within due to their inability to offer concrete proposals to the problems they love to denounce. This scenario makes us the only hope for Europe. We

have a responsibility towards those citizens who now, more than ever, demand from us European solutions.

Dear friends, a united Europe needs a united EPP. As you all know, no other political party has the coordination capacity that we have. However, our good cooperation is threatened by some important internal debates, which we have not ignored, but which still need concrete and definitive solutions. In some countries fragmentation, even fights among our EPP member parties have hindered our capacity to implement our European vision. I believe therefore, that in some countries we must find a way to help build consensus, and present citizens a single, coherent, center-right political platform. The EPP does not ask you to merge, but to collaborate, so that we can have more EPP governments and more opportunities to help our citizens.

This party must also strengthen its communication capacity and the use of new technologies. Politics are not done as it was 17 years ago when I was first elected as Secretary General. We have to accept this reality and adapt. This must be the priority for this party in this new cycle. But we will not succeed if our parties do not increase coordination amongst themselves and with us. One positive consequence of our campaigns in 2014 and 2019 has been the improvement of collaboration and coordination, but we need to be more ambitious.

Finally, I have to put it bluntly, we must be honest with our European citizens about our positions and defend them with pride. As I told you before, we are the party of balance. But we must also stop acting as if we were constantly walking on eggshells. We all share the frustration of being constantly attacked by the so-called specialized press for being the reasonable center-right. The dictatorship of political correctness always ends up being used against us and indirectly supporting the left and the populist narratives. When Macron imposed immigration quotas in France two weeks ago, did the press criticize him? Where is the outrage for the attacks against the rights of refugees, and legal migrants in this case?

Ladies and gentlemen, we do not produce headlines because we are not populists. I know that nowadays, in this saturated world of news, we might look boring, but my friends, I prefer to be boring than to destroy the future of my daughters. In years to come, I want to look into my daughters' eyes and see that they can be proud of what we did here for the European future. That for me has much more value than any headline. If defending democracy and liberty in Europe is boring, so be it, we will continue to fight for it in Ukraine, in Belarus, in Moldavia, in Bolivia, in Nicaragua, in Cuba and, of course, in Venezuela we will support Juan Guaidó. We will support our friends in Venezuela that are fighting today for freedom. The EPP is with you. And also, we will always denounce the death of Daphne Caruana Galizia in Malta, and the killing of a journalist in Slovakia. Will the Socialists do that? No, I don't think so. We will denounce the persecution of free media wherever it takes place. We do not make ideological differences when it comes to the defense of freedom.

But we cannot defend freedom in this world alone. I do not care who is the President of the United States, this fight cannot be won without the U.S. No secret here; you know my commitment to the transatlantic relationship, as I always joke about it: I am the product of a transatlantic relationship, a Spanish father and an American mother. Members of my American family fought for freedom in Europe, and this bond is stronger than any tweet.

And the fight for freedom also means the fight against nationalism, that tried to bring divisions and exclusion. Europe is a continent where diversity is respected and defended, but

there will always be those who try to pervert our cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity, which is an asset, and turn them into weapons of division. In my country, Pablo Casado and my colleagues from Partido Popular are fighting for the unity of Spain, but this is a fight for all of you. The unity of Spain is the unity of France, of Romania, of Italy and many other European countries. It is a fight for the unity of Europe. Nationalism brought us two wars. There will be no third one, no matter what the enemies of unity, liberty and solidarity try to do.

Dear friends, the good news is that we are in a great position to defend our project, to defend Europe and get the fair recognition we deserve. Donald Tusk, and our friends from Central and Eastern Europe will help us bring down the remains of the Berlin Wall, because today still in the European Parliament and in our national parliaments the left still insists on defending the memory of the corrupt and bloody dictatorships from the Soviet system. Shame on them!

Dear friends, I am very proud to belong to the party, which for decades denounced and helped bring the Communist system down. The challenges we face today are complex, we all know it, but we are ready for them. We have a great captain on the ship, and we have you. Let's do it together, let's do it united, we cannot and we will not fail Europe. This is our mission, and we cannot achieve it without all of you.

Thank you very much.

Excerpts from a speech by Donald Tusk, newly elected President of EPP, delivered in Zagreb, Croatia, on 20 November, 2019

Today, even more than in the past, it is fear that plays the biggest role in politics. Most people still care more about their safety than about anything else. For example, in such moments as the migration crisis and a new wave of terrorism, it is fear which dominates over other social emotions. "Give us a sense of safety and security!" – this is what we have been hearing in Europe in the last years, and whoever can best respond to this call, gets the support of the public.

In times of uncertainty, and most probably there will be no other times, when everything changes around us, and runs off in all directions, people want to be certain that those in power will not abandon them, that they will not turn their backs on them. When left alone, they start looking for those who offer care and concentration on their problems. They desire attention. "Look at us" – they seem to say – "we are here." They, or should I say, we all are hungry for appreciation, dignity and importance, and we all feel the need to be part of a bigger community. And to be proud of it. This is why it is so easy to win people's hearts by those who shout in a loud voice: "Get up off your knees, make your country great again, take back control." In other words, those who strike the right chord, the chord of dignity, will get people's votes.

As always, people have a need for order, harmony, and understanding the world around them. That is why we all need to be deeply rooted in our traditions, understandable cultural codes, and in places we call ours. And which are somehow distinctive from others.

As I have already said, people also want to be part of a bigger community with which they know how to identify. Through language, religion, or a common understanding of history. And most often, it is still a nation that is such a community. Whoever rejects from his political vocabulary and axiology terms such as: homeland, heimat, domovina, patria, ojczyzna, will find that it is very difficult to face up to the crucial task: that of giving people this sense of safety and security.

Under no condition can we abdicate from this task. It is in fact encoded in the genes of Christian Democracy. And it is not a coincidence that one of the most important Christian Democratic schools of thought was the so-called Ordoliberalism, which built a difficult but possible synthesis of freedom, order and tradition.

I deeply believe that only those who want and are able to give people a feeling of safety and security, preserving at the same time their freedoms and rights, have a mandate to run for power. Under no circumstances can we give away the sphere of security and order to political populists, manipulators and autocrats, who lead people to believe that freedom cannot be reconciled with security. That protecting our borders and territory cannot be reconciled with liberal democracy, and an effective governance with the rule of law.

This is the essence of our internal debate within the European People's Party. I would like us to end it as quickly as possible with an obvious conclusion. We will not sacrifice values like civic liberties, the rule of law, and decency in public life on the altar of security and order, because there is simply no need. Because they don't exclude one another. Whoever is unable to accept it, is de facto placing himself outside our family.