



**The Islamic Religious Community of Italy (COREIS):
“Hagia Sophia unites Christians and Muslims across the globe”**

**“The largest international political network, inspired by Christianity,
allies with the world’s largest Islamic organization to denounce
the political weaponization of religion”**

MILAN, Italy / August 18, 2020: Two days before the Islamic New Year (*1 Muharram 1442 AH*) Imam Yahya Sergio Yahe Pallavicini—President of the Islamic Religious Community of Italy (COREIS)—published a message from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) General Secretary KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf to the 1.4 million Muslims who live in Italy.

In an [article](#) that accompanied the NU General Secretary’s message, COREIS welcomed the recent adoption—by Centrist Democrat International (CDI) and the European People’s Party (EPP)—of a statement issued by the NU-based National Awakening Party (PKB) of Indonesia.

The PKB/CDI statement, which addressed concerns related to Turkey’s interventionist foreign policy, warned that “President Erdogan’s words and actions... threaten peace and security in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, where similar narratives employed by al-Qaeda, ISIS, al-Shabab and Boko Haram have led to countless terrorist attacks and produced millions of refugees.”

“Hagia Sophia unites Christians and Muslims across the globe,” reads the headline in COREIS Italiana’s article welcoming the Islamic New Year. “The largest international political network, inspired by Christianity, allies with the world’s largest Islamic organization to denounce the political weaponization of religion.” The COREIS article goes on to state:

“To embrace tribal identity rather than the unifying, primary message of Islam (*rahmah*, or universal love and compassion) is to court spiritual and political disaster. In an age of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, we cannot afford to repeat the tragic conflicts of the past.”

This is how Shaykh Yahya Cholil Staquf, Secretary General of Nahdlatul Ulama—the largest Islamic organization in the world with over 90 million members—expressed it in a letter addressed to Imam Yahya Pallavicini, President of the Islamic Religious Community of Italy (COREIS Italiana).

Read the [Message from Shaykh Yahya Cholil Staquf](#) to the Islamic Religious Community of Italy [which also appears below, translated from Italian into English].

This message from the Muslims of Indonesia to the Muslims of Italy, follows and accompanies an official declaration signed by the largest Islamic party in Indonesia (the National Awakening Party, or PKB, which is closely linked to Nahdlatul Ulama). Of particular significance is the fact that PKB’s statement was adopted by Centrist Democrat International (CDI) and endorsed by the European People’s Party (EPP),

whose members “put aside long-standing differences,” to do so, as the [press release](#) stated. It continues:

“The PKB/CDI statement came in response to President Erdogan’s effort to present himself as a leader of the global Muslim community and restore political Islam to a position of dominance in the world order.”

“Erdogan’s remarks”—reads the PKB/CDI Statement, which was adopted by Christians and Muslims alike—“were swiftly endorsed by the Muslim Brotherhood, Iran and a wide range of Islamic supremacists worldwide” who wish to create “an Islamic state or caliphate.”

In contrast, the Indonesian head of Nahdlatul Ulama explained in his letter to COREIS that “the 21st century offers Muslims an unprecedented opportunity to cooperate with non-Muslims, presenting Islam not as a supremacist ideology or vehicle for conquest, but rather, as one of many paths through which humans may attain spiritual perfection.”

On these topics we also point out a reflection by Imam Yahya Pallavicini published in *Finnegans* magazine, [“2020/1441: Makkah, Istanbul, Srebrenica.”](#)

“It seems to us that if the ruler of Istanbul had genuinely wished to provide a universal testament of religious sensibility, in regard to Hagia Sophia—as Muslim spiritual masters have taught for centuries—he could have allowed this cathedral to be ‘reborn’ as it was originally built by Christian (architectural) masters, recognizing and respecting their noble intention, which is the true foundation of that ritual space and a symbol of sacred art that remains intensely relevant today, especially for Orthodox Christians who dwell in the city or visit Istanbul, so that they might offer their adoration and worship to the Merciful Lord (*‘il Signore Miserecordioso’*).”

On this occasion we wish all Muslims a good start to the new *hijri* year 1442!

COREIS President Imam Yahya Sergio Yahe Pallavicini also serves as chairman of the ISESCO Council for Education and Culture in the West and imam of al-Wahid Mosque in Milan. He is the son of the renowned Shaykh Abd al-Wahid, who converted to Islam in 1951 and led the Italian branch of the *Ahamadiyyah Idrissiyyah Shadhiliyyah* Sufi Order until his death in 2017. Shaykh Abd al-Wahid, who founded COREIS in 1993, was deeply linked to the teachings of René Guénon (aka Shaykh Abd al-Wahid Yahya) and a friend of Titus Burckhardt (Sidi Ibrahim), who guided him to enter Islam.

Message from Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staqf to the Islamic Religious Community of Italy (COREIS)

Greetings to all of you, from your Indonesian brothers and sisters of Nahdlatul Ulama.

Praise be to God (swt.) for having revealed to us the precious gift of Islam, so that we may benefit and share its immense blessings with others, by striving to foster the spiritual and material well-being of all, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

For every human being is created equal. We are all children of Adam, whose original nature (*fitrah*) prompts us to worship God; to know and respect others; and to long for a state of universal human fraternity (*ukhuwwah basyariyah*). We are brethren, meant to live side-by-side in prosperity and peace.

In his last sermon—at Mina during his final haj—the Prophet (*saw.*) said: “Oh humans! Our God is One and our father (*Nabi Adam*) is one.”

The Messenger of God did not say, “Oh Muslims!” or “Oh Arabs!” Rather, he used his final sermon to invoke our common humanity and urge us to live peacefully with one another.

Over time, this prophetic message of *rahmah* (universal love and compassion) has been widely forgotten due to the avarice of man, who—in his desire to enjoy pleasure and avoid pain—surrenders to egotism, commits injustice and pursues power for the sake of personal gratification.

When seeking to dominate others, men turn all that is precious into weapons with which to strike their enemies—including that which is *most* precious, religion itself.

If we forget that the primary message of Islam is *rahmah*, then we may easily be tempted to weaponize history and our religious identity. But to do so is to yield to the promptings of the ego and to be led by spiritually ignorant men. To do so is to ignore *fitrah* and the call for us to surrender to God by following the straight path of Islam. This is the danger posed by anyone who seeks to weaponize religion for political gain.

To embrace tribal identity rather than the unifying, primary message of Islam (*rahmah*) is to court spiritual and political disaster. In an age of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, we cannot afford to repeat the tragic conflicts of the past. We cannot afford to continue the cycle of hatred, tyranny and violence that has plagued humanity since time immemorial.

Instead, we should follow the Prophet’s exhortation to choose *rahmah* (universal love and compassion) and peace. Humanitarian Islam is a global movement that seeks to restore *rahmah* to its rightful place as the primary message of Islam, by addressing obsolete and problematic elements within Islamic orthodoxy that lend themselves to tyranny, while positioning these efforts within a much broader initiative to reject any and all forms of tyranny, and foster the emergence of a global civilization endowed with noble character.

The inspiration for Humanitarian Islam is the unique example of the 15th/16th century *Wali Songo* (“Nine Saints”) who proselytized *Islam Nusantara* (“East Indies Islam”)—rooted in the principle of *rahmah*—stressing the need to contextualize Islamic teachings and adapt these to the ever-changing realities of space and time, while presenting Islam not as a supremacist ideology or vehicle for conquest, but rather, as one of many paths through which humans may attain spiritual perfection.

The 21st century offers an unprecedented opportunity for Muslims to cooperate with non-Muslims—to our mutual benefit, and on a truly global scale—and thereby fulfill the prophetic mission, which was to perfect the moral framework of humanity and to serve as a blessing for all creation (*rahmatan lil-‘alamīn*). We need not be hostages of the past. We can choose to create a better world. We can choose to follow the noble example of our Prophet (*saw.*) and bequeath a different and much brighter legacy to future generations. This is the choice that lies before us.

WaLlahu A‘lam. God alone knows the truth of all things.

Jakarta, 12 August 2020