



U.S. Secretary of State Praises Nahdlatul Ulama, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, Humanitarian Islam and the Movement for Shared Civilizational Values

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“I am ecstatic to be part of this event today.”

JAKARTA, Indonesia (October 29, 2020): U.S. Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo delivered a major speech in the world’s largest Muslim-majority nation and democracy, at an event hosted by Nahdlatul Ulama’s 5-million-member young adults movement, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, and Bayt ar-Rahmah, which coordinates the global expansion of NU and Ansor activities.

Titled “Nurturing the Shared Civilizational Aspirations of *Islam Rahmatan li al-‘Alamin*, the Republic of Indonesia and the United States of America,” the event took place at the Four Seasons Hotel in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, and was part of a two-day forum attended by top leaders of Nahdlatul Ulama, Ansor, the Government of Indonesia, the US Department of State and all six of Indonesia’s major religions.

Addressing NU spiritual leaders who established Bayt ar-Rahmah, Humanitarian Islam and the Movement for Shared Civilizational Values in order to restore universal love and compassion (*rahmah*) as the primary message of Islam, Secretary Pompeo said:

“Your remarkable organizations, all of you sitting here today, have been powerful forces in the defense of unalienable rights. NU helped spur independence. You provided a voice and a conscience for the nation during more than three decades of authoritarian rule.

“Your very own Gus Dur (Abdurrahman Wahid, 1940 – 2009) helped to lead Indonesia’s transition to democracy. His profoundly humane vision and teachings inspired the birth of the Humanitarian Islam movement. His legacy lives on today in the current generation of leaders who, in 2014, launched the Islam Nusantara campaign to repudiate ISIS’ hateful and violent brand of Islam. And it lives on in the Movement for Shared Civilizational Values as well.”

Secretary Pompeo’s full speech may be read and/or viewed below.

Remarks by Secretary Pompeo “On Unalienable Rights and Traditions of Tolerance”

Thank you for that kind introduction. *Selamat siang* [good afternoon] to you all.

Mr. General Secretary, it is wonderful to be here. I have been looking forward to this since the day that we found a date that worked and were able to accept the invitation. It was most gracious of you to invite me here and I am ecstatic to be part of this event today.

I want to make sure and thank all the people who made this happen. I want to thank and acknowledge the leaders of the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah, those of you who are present. Thank you.

A special welcome also to the other faith leaders and members of the diplomatic corps who are here and those who are watching via livestream as well.

And of course, a warm hello to the people of Indonesia. From the beaches of Bali to the volcanoes of Sumatra, this is truly an extraordinary nation.

I'm confident that that's not a unique statement, that you've heard that a lot before. It's a very special place.

**“I'm here in Indonesia because I believe that
Indonesia shows us the way forward”**

For now, of course, we're all focused on beating the virus that was born in Wuhan.

And before I begin, I want to express my condolences to all the Indonesians who have lost their lives or suffered economic hardship as a result of that virus.

You should know that the United States of America is with you.

And as I told President Widodo today and Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, I am very confident that we will emerge stronger because of the very nature of our two countries.

It was almost one year ago that our nations mourned the passing of the great Muslim scholar Bahtiar Effendy. He gave voice to our shared commitment to democracy, to tolerance, and to open dialogue.

His work aligned with a deep respect for what we often refer to in the Americas as “unalienable rights.”

**“You have created this model of how different faiths and different ethnic
groups and political ideologies can co-exist peacefully and settle their
disagreements through democratic means. This is glorious.”**

I've spent a lot of time as the Secretary of State talking about this subject, and I know you hosted a conference just yesterday to discuss the report of the State Department's Commission on Unalienable Rights, which I created. And I want to also mention I am pleased to say the Chair of the Commission, Professor Mary Ann Glendon, is with us today. Mary Ann, thank you for being here. I understand that it was a great day yesterday. Thank you. (Applause.)

So we unveiled our report in July of this year, and it created something of a stir. Secretaries of State don't usually spend time on what critics call an “obscure” subject. But it's not obscure,

and it shouldn't be obscure, and it can't be obscure. It is foundational to human dignity and to freedom.

The founding principle of the United States is very, very simple. America's Declaration of Independence affirms that governments exist to secure the rights inherent in every human being.

Indeed, as the commission's report argues, the United States was the first nation founded on a commitment, a deep commitment to universal rights for all human beings.

Now, the most fundamental of these rights is the right to freedom of conscience, including religious freedom. It's the basis for the most important conversations about what conscience tells us and about what God demands of each of us.

It's one reason that religious freedom is the very first freedom enumerated in our Constitution, in the American constitution. As an evangelical Christian, my faith informs how I live, how I work, how I think.

It is exceedingly rare in the scope of human history for a nation to make those promises to its citizens. And it is even rarer for nations to keep them.

Our respect, America's respect for God-given rights, is the defining feature of our national spirit. It's why America stood tallest among Western democracies in supporting your independence from colonial rule and has been a stalwart supporter of Indonesia's transition to democracy over these past two decades. The fact that our people embrace freedom and uphold a tradition of tolerance is very special. We should never lose it.

We must continue upholding our traditions, and we must do so very actively. We can't assume our freedoms and our faith will live on. We must stand for what we believe.

And that's what I want to talk about today. That's my message.

I'm here – I'm here in Indonesia because I believe that Indonesia shows us the way forward. There is literally no reason that Islam can't co-exist peacefully alongside Christianity or Buddhism. And I know – I know this is something that is sometimes hard to grasp for those few who twist Islamic teachings to justify violence in the name of this faith.

Indonesians and Americans know that this is wrong. We know that peaceful coexistence and mutual respect is possible.

Indeed, Indonesia's national motto, translated into English, is, "Unity Amid Diversity." Now that's not so different from America's which is: "Out of many, one." If you think about them, they have much in common, much that overlaps.

Indeed, your Constitution from 1945 clearly declares that every person shall be free: "Every person shall be free to... practice the religion of his [or] her choice." Thomas Jefferson could not have said it better.

And just as the American founders looked to the Western tradition as inspiration for the structure of our free society, your founders too found inspiration in your traditions, your own

traditions, and established Pancasila – foundational principles that enshrined the importance of faith in the life of your country.

It determined that Indonesia’s embrace of diverse religions, people, and cultures would become a core pillar of your country’s success.

“We can’t assume our freedoms and our faith will live on. We must stand for what we believe. And that’s what I want to talk about today.”

The flexible, inclusive, and tolerant democratic culture that has emerged since the Reformasi of 1998 has defied the skeptics, the skeptics who believed that Indonesia could only be governed by a strongman restricting the rights of its people. Indonesia has since then given the whole world a positive model of how different faiths, different ethnic groups —

(Applause.)

You’ve given, you have created this model of how different faiths and different ethnic groups and political ideologies can co-exist peacefully and settle their disagreements through democratic means. This is glorious.

And you should know, too, that I accept the core problem that democracies aren’t perfect either. We get it wrong sometimes, too. And as the commission’s report documents, most of American history can be understood as a struggle, a struggle to realize the Declaration of Independence’s beautiful promises.

But we must always distinguish – and this is central – we must always distinguish between free and democratic nations that inevitably fall short of their principles and those regimes that reject the very idea of human rights, the very idea of religious freedom, the very concept of self-government as a possibility.

The former – democracies – the former can progress; the latter can only oppress.

We stand, all of us, for a tradition of tolerance.

I want to say, too, certainly, your national leadership has played an important role in fostering the harmony that we all seek.

“[Gus Dur’s] profoundly humane vision and teachings inspired the birth of the Humanitarian Islam movement... [while] the Islam Nusantara campaign repudiate[d] ISIS’ hateful and violent brand of Islam.”

But in any free society, it’s a nation’s citizens who ultimately sustain and propagate its core ideals.

In that respect, your remarkable organizations, all of you sitting here today, have been powerful forces in the defense of unalienable rights.

NU helped spur independence.

You provided a voice and a conscience for the nation during more than three decades of authoritarian rule.

Your very own Gus Dur helped to lead Indonesia's transition to democracy.

His profoundly humane vision and teachings inspired the birth of the Humanitarian Islam movement.

His legacy lives on today in the current generation of leaders who, in 2014, launched the Islam Nusantara campaign to repudiate ISIS's hateful and violent brand of Islam. And it lives on in the Movement for Shared Civilizational Values as well.

Every day, groups like NU and the Muhammadiyah represent tens of millions of Indonesian Muslims who believe in a tradition of tolerance within a thriving democracy. (Applause.)

I want to remind all of you here today that your work is now more important than ever. Blasphemy accusations, which destroy lives, have become more common. Discrimination against non-official religions renders their practitioners second-class citizens who are subject to abuse and deprivation.

I know I have great confidence in you all. I know you'll keep speaking out against such blows to pluralism.

I know too that you'll encourage your leaders to strengthen both Indonesia's proud traditions and its newer democratic institutions.

And I know too that you'll draw on your faith to advocate for the human dignity of your fellow human beings when you know that they are being mistreated.

To that end, I think it's worth taking a moment to consider something else.

As the Secretary of State, I've had the incredible privilege to see what happens when Indonesia leads. From our work together in ASEAN, the G20, the Security Council, I know that Indonesia has an incredible reach and potential as a force for good in the region and indeed throughout the entire world.

And today I want to urge you – I want you to urge the same actions I asked the Catholic Church's leaders to do in the Vatican.

We need more religious leaders to speak out on behalf of people of all faiths wherever their rights are being violated. We need more religious leaders to be a moral witness. We need more religious leaders to support principles of "humanity and justice," as your founders wrote, and as our respect for unalienable rights demands.

“I know that the Chinese Communist Party has tried to convince Indonesians to look away from the torments your fellow Muslims are suffering”

The Burmese military's violent oppression of Rohingya and other minorities is one area where Indonesia has pushed ASEAN to live up to humanitarian ideals, but where progress on justice remains stalled.

Likewise, today, the Iranian regime's persecution of Baha'is, Christians, Sunni Muslims, and other minority groups has failed to galvanize a proper denunciation from that country's diplomatic partners or the religious leaders in many Muslim-majority countries.

But in fact, the gravest threat to the future of religious freedom is the Chinese Communist Party's war against people of all faiths: Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and Falun Gong practitioners alike.

The atheist Chinese Communist Party has tried to convince the world that its brutalization of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang is necessary as a part of its counterterrorism efforts or poverty alleviation, depending on which audience that they are speaking to.

But you know – you know; we know – we know that there is no counterterrorism justification for forcing Uyghur Muslims to eat pork during Ramadan or destroying a Muslim cemetery.

There is no poverty-alleviation justification for forced sterilizations or taking children away from their parents to be re-educated in state-run boarding schools.

I know that the Chinese Communist Party has tried to convince Indonesians to look away from the torments your fellow Muslims are suffering.

“We need more religious leaders to speak out on behalf of people of all faiths wherever their rights are being violated”

I know that these same CCP officials have spun fantastic tales of happy Uyghurs eager to discard their ethnic, religious, and cultural identities to become more “modern” and enjoy the benefits of CCP-led development.

When you hear these arguments, I'd just ask you to do this: search your hearts. Look at the facts. Listen to the tales of the survivors and of their families.

Think about what you know of how authoritarian governments treat those who resist its rule.

There are now dozens – maybe hundreds – of credible academic and research reports documenting what is taking place in Xinjiang.

I personally had the chance to hear the stories of that immense human suffering firsthand when I met in Kazakhstan with relatives of ethnic Kazakhs that had been held in camps in western China. Their tears filled my heart – first with anger and then with resolve.

That meeting underscored to me how precious God-given freedoms are and the responsibility that each of us has to defend them. And indeed, my faith teaches me the same thing:

It teaches me that human beings have a basic dignity because they are made in God's image, and that as people of faith we have an obligation to honor that truth by protecting the weak and comforting the afflicted.

My holy book teaches me that “faith without works is dead.”

It teaches me that of those to whom much is given, much is expected.

I’m sure you know the ways that the Islamic tradition – and the Indonesian tradition – demand that we speak out and work for justice.

Look, I know you’ll do that. I’m excited to have a very robust discussion with the General Secretary [Yahya Staquf] on all of these ideas, so I’ll stop here.

And I want to remind you that democracies all have very different cultural heritages, but in spite of that we have a tremendous amount in common. All of our countries have struggled with crises, with injustice, and threats – both internal and external – but we continue working towards that more perfect union.

We all do this because our people have the same yearning for God-given unalienable rights as people everywhere do.

Free people of free nations must defend those rights. It is our duty. Even as we each do this – and even as we do this in our own and often different ways, we should recognize that we have strength in numbers. We should recognize that we can turn to each other for support in difficult times, and that our cherished rights and values are absolutely worth defending at every moment, as the birthright of every people.

Many leaders of your organizations have nobly helped Indonesia do that for decades and earned a respected place in Indonesia’s democratic pantheon.

I hope that everyone here today will add to this legacy in the days and months and years to come.

May God bless you.

And God bless your democracy.

And God bless Indonesia and the United States of America as well.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

“We stand, all of us, for a tradition of tolerance.”

[Watch Part 1 of Secretary Pompeo’s Address to Gerakan Pemuda Ansor](#) (9:48)

[Watch Part 2 of Secretary Pompeo’s Address to Gerakan Pemuda Ansor](#) (5:48)

[Watch Secretary Pompeo’s remarks “In any free society, it’s a nation’s citizens who ultimately sustain and propagate its core ideals.”](#) (2:14)