



CDI Seeks to Deepen and Expand Cooperation with its Indonesian Sister Party, PKB

World's Largest Political Network Commends Indonesia for Appointing Humanitarian Islam Co-founder as its Minister of Religious Affairs

A major step “in realizing our shared aspirations for a better world.”

Observers hail Minister's swift action in defense of women's rights, religious minorities and Indonesia's Constitution

BRUSSELS, February 18, 2021: The Executive Committee of the world's largest political network, Centrist Democrat International (CDI), has unanimously adopted a formal statement praising the appointment of Humanitarian Islam co-founder H. Yaqut Cholil Qoumas (“Gus Yaqut”) as Indonesia's Minister of Religious Affairs. The appointment has been widely [hailed by analysts](#) as evidence of a growing determination by the government of Indonesian President Joko Widodo to combat Islamist extremism, uphold the Constitution and defend Indonesia's ancient traditions of religious pluralism and tolerance.

Since his [appointment](#) on December 22, 2020, Gus Yaqut has spearheaded a coordinated effort to reign in Islamist groups and defend women and religious minorities from persistent attempts by Islamists and their political allies to deprive them of equal rights. Key steps taken in this regard include dissolution of the extremist vigilante group “Front for Defenders of Islam” (FPI) on December 30, 2020, and subsequent issuance of a joint ministerial decree banning compulsory religious dress in state schools across the nation, an unconstitutional practice often used to coerce both Muslim and non-Muslim girls into wearing a so-called Islamic head covering.

Issued on February 3, 2021 — and co-signed by Mr. Qoumas, Indonesia's Home Affairs Minister Muhammad Tito Karnavian and Minister of Education Nadiem Makarim — the decree gives local administrations 30 days to end the unconstitutional enforcement of compulsory religious dress in state schools, instead upholding individual students' and their parents' right to choose between school uniforms with or without “religious attributes” such as a head covering. Minister Karnavian has extensive first-hand experience of combating Islamist extremism and terror, having formerly served as commander of Indonesia's National Police force and head of Detachment 88, an elite unit tasked with tracking down and neutralizing terrorist cells.

Supported by Mr. Qoumas, these measures constitute the most forceful government rollback of Islamist influence in Indonesia since the 1998 advent of democracy under Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Chairman and LibForAll co-founder President Abdurrahman Wahid — and has garnered widespread national and international acclaim. On February 5, the BBC [reported](#) “Indonesia bans forced religious attire in schools” and quoted Indonesia's Minister for Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim as saying “the choice of wearing religious attire [is] ‘an individual's right... it is not the school's decision.’”

The Spectator (est. 1828) published an [article](#) headlined “Indonesia's mandatory hijab ban is a triumph for women.” The article's Pakistan-based author analyzed the global significance of this

development, concluding that Islamist regimes’ “hypocrisy has been laid bare by Indonesia’s mandatory hijab ban. It’s a step that will go a long way in creating a world where wearing Islamic symbols does not lead to anti-Muslim backlash [in the West] or Islamist subjugation.”

Prior to his appointment as Indonesia’s Minister of Religious Affairs, Mr. Qoumas served as chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama’s 5-million-member young adults organization, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, which constitutes the primary vehicle for the grassroots mobilization of NU’s more than 90 million followers and its first line of defense against Islamists and their political allies, both foreign and domestic. Gus Yaqut is also a leading member of Indonesia’s largest Islamic political party, PKB. PKB — which was co-founded by President Wahid and Bayt ar-Rahmah Chairman KH. A. Mustofa Bisri in 1998 — joined Centrist Democrat International in 2018 and systematically promotes Humanitarian Islam upon the world stage.

[Read the full text of CDI’s *Recognition of Mr. Yaqut Cholil Qoumas’ appointment as Indonesia’s Minister of Religious Affairs.*](#)