



## Muslim Women Prepare to Lead

### Nahdlatul Ulama empowers women to issue Islamic rulings (*fatwas*)

***“The principle is ‘appoint whoever is most able.’ It’s as simple as that. If women have a greater capacity than men, that’s not a problem, for the Prophet said of [his wife] Sayyidina Aisha, ‘take half of your religion from this woman.’”***

***~ KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf  
General Chairman, Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board***

### NU encourages Muslims to follow a “middle path,” between the extremes of Islamist and militant secular ideology

PURWAKARTA, West Java, 6 May 2023 — For the first time in its 100-year history, the world’s largest Muslim organization has authorized female religious scholars to address issues related to Islamic law, by opening participation in *Lembaga Bahtsul Masa’il* (LBM) decision-making to women.

A prestigious division of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), LBM is composed of prominent *ulama* (religious scholars) whose knowledge and mastery of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) qualifies them to issue authoritative rulings on matters of practical and immediate concern to Muslims. Historically, throughout the Muslim world, the authority to issue *fatwas* has, with rare exceptions, been conferred almost exclusively upon men.

In 2019, Lembaga Bahtsul Masa’il was responsible for issuing a [series of historic rulings](#) that eliminated use of the term *kafir* (infidel) to describe one’s fellow citizens; affirmed the legitimacy of the nation state and laws created through modern political processes; committed Muslims to strive for peace as a religious obligation; and provided a detailed framework for bringing Islamic orthodoxy into alignment with 21st century norms.

Following his December 2021 election as General Chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board (PBNU), KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf swiftly appointed women to the Central Board — another first for the mass organization. The eleven female appointees included Alissa Wahid, daughter of former NU Chairman and Indonesian President H.E. KH. Abdurrahman Wahid; Khofifah Indar Parawansa, Governor of East Java; and Badriyah Fayumi, head of the Indonesian Women’s Ulama Congress (KUPI), which she describes as “not a formal organization, but the institutionalization of female communities and networks: a cultural force.”

On 6 May, Mr. Staquf delivered the keynote address at a 3-day conference of Lembaga Bahtsul Masa’il hosted by PP. al-Muhajirin Islamic boarding school in Purwakarta, West Java. Attended by dozens of female religious scholars, the LBM conference was held in conjunction with a [halagoh](#) (study circle) on [Islamic Jurisprudence for a Global Civilization](#) (*fiqh al-*

*hadarah*). *Fiqh al-hadarah* provides a conceptual and theological framework for [NU's wide-ranging initiative](#) to recontextualize obsolete and problematic tenets of Islamic orthodoxy.

In his address, Mr. Staquf welcomed the participation of female Islamic scholars and stated:

Ladies and gentlemen, *kyais*, *nyais*, and *ulama* (male and female religious scholars). I have requested that [LBM General Secretary] Kyai Mahbub refer to the female invitees here today as “*nyai*,” for you are all well-versed in Islamic jurisprudence.

You are not women who — upon merely wearing a headscarf — are [erroneously] referred to as *ulama*. I am sure that the *nyais* present here today are, God willing, female *ulama* from an authentic Nahdlatul Ulama background....

We want to see female *ulama* develop a significant role within Nahdlatul Ulama. We want to see female Islamic scholars trained in an NU environment.

Over the years, several initiatives that claim to serve as vehicles for female *ulama* have come to my attention, but I have always wanted to ascertain whether these truly were female *ulama*, within NU, or not.

Today, praise be to God — with the help of Kyai Abun Bunyamin and Bahtsul Masa'il, led by Pak Mahbub Maafi — we have succeeded in launching this council [of female *ulama*].

The council will highlight the work of female scholars so that later, I'm sorry to say, male religious scholars will no longer have much of a role in Nahdlatul Ulama [laughter]. We'll see what our women *ulama* are made of.

Explaining women's suitability for leadership, Mr. Staquf said:

The other day I was asked by Pak Ulil [Abshar Abdalla], “what do we really want to accomplish [through Islamic Jurisprudence for a Global Civilization] in regard to women?” I replied simply: “That women receive equal access to opportunities enabling them to develop their capacities. This is what [prominent female NU activists] Nyai Djuaesih and Nyai Siti Sarah demanded [during the 13th NU Congress in Menes, 1938].”

Women must enjoy the same opportunities as men. If men can recite the Qur'an, women should also be able to do so. If men can study, women should also be allowed to. The point is that if men can be educated, women should also be educated.

This is what Nyai Djuaesih and Nyai Siti Sarah demanded, for [speaking in Arabic] “seeking knowledge is mandatory for all Muslims, both men and women.”

If men and women have equal opportunities, the rest will simply be a matter of capacity. Whoever has the greater capacity should be appointed, following the Islamic principle: [speaking in Arabic] “appoint whoever is most capable.”

It's as simple as that. If women have a greater capacity than men, that's not a problem. The Prophet said of [his wife] Sayyidina Aisha [speaking Arabic]: "take half of your religion from this woman," and ordered a man to learn the Qur'an from her.

It is also the case that [the Prophet's daughter] Fatimah became a source and reference for her husband's [Ali's] *fatwas*. It was a matter of capacity. This includes Kyai Mahbub here, who requested a *fatwa* from his wife: it's a matter of capacity [laughter].

I also want to emphasize that when I appointed a number of women to the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board, this was due to their personal capabilities. It was not a question of quotas. I'm not enamored with quotas. Why do we need them? If there are more capable women than men, then that's simply a problem for men. It's a question of capacity. The principle is simple [speaking in Arabic]: "appoint whoever is most capable."

Addressing Nahdlatul Ulama's Sunni Muslim followers — many of whom are socially conservative — Mr. Staquf observed that women's leadership is vital in a context where secular ideologies increasingly threaten the cohesion of society's most fundamental unit, the family:

I myself — and, I believe, Pak Ulil [Abshar Abdalla] too — have been extremely active in various interfaith forums since the 1980s. In the 1990s and early 2000s, a tendency began to emerge whereby agendas that did not originate from within a religious environment started to be introduced and discussed within the context of interfaith dialogue. This was so that those secular agendas could be supported in the name of religion....

We want to examine problems that confront us and respond from the perspective of our own tradition — namely, by developing insights rooted in the traditions of *ahl al-sunnah wa-al-jama'ah* (Sunni Islam) — and not merely echo talking points or ideologies concocted somewhere else. We want to assume responsibility for finding solutions to the real problems facing us.

That is why, ladies and gentlemen, I have told Muslimat [NU's adult women's organization] and Fatayat [NU's young adult women's organization] that they should not embrace secular feminism: precisely because feminism is an ideology and a set of ideas conceived outside of an Islamic environment. We don't need to run around looking for Islamic arguments to justify feminism. What for?

Let's consider the role and needs of women from an Islamic perspective, rather than from a secular, feminist perspective. Feminism consists of various theories and analyses that subsequently morphed into a full-blown ideology in the West. If we uncritically adopt a "feminist" understanding of women without thinking about these issues from an Islamic perspective (*tafsir*), then we will be like the tail of a four-legged animal, adopting foreign agendas conceived by "heaven-knows-who" for "heaven-knows-what" purpose.

If we examine contemporary feminism, it has clearly become a dominant mode of discourse in the West, and morphed into an ideology that seeks to deconstruct a traditional understanding of women.... Feminism subsequently developed to embrace "gender inclusivity," which entails demands for sexual equality in the name of justice.

Then, the concept of gender itself morphed so that it was no longer a matter of biological differences, but also of sexual orientation, including LGBTQ and so on.

If we were to adopt secular feminist ideology, we would be guided by ideas nurtured outside of a religious environment. We don't need to follow these agendas, and we don't need to use fashionable labels to describe ideas that we develop in our Islamic environment.

We already have women's activism conducted by Muslimat, Fatayat, and now forums established for female *ulama*. But we don't need to call our mode of activism "feminism." What for? What would we achieve by doing this?

I regard this as an extremely important issue confronting the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board (PBNU), which we must address. For various movements are active on the international stage, which aggressively seek to penetrate religious institutions such as Nahdlatul Ulama.

It is not only us who are being infiltrated and coming under pressure from these movements. Within the Anglican Communion, for example — that is, the Church of England (CoE) — there recently occurred an extraordinary schism when, all of a sudden, the central Anglican authority in England issued a *fatwa* (religious ruling) that allows the blessing of same-sex marriages within CoE churches. This move was rejected by Anglicans in Africa. Significantly, Anglicans in Africa vastly outnumber those who still practice this faith in England!

African Anglicans have already consolidated, in order to separate from their historical 'Mother Church' in England. Now, why did the Church of England behave this way? Because it has long been the target of extraordinary pressure and infiltration by secular ideologies.

In Finland, there is a Lutheran bishop who published a booklet about family values in Christianity. In this booklet it was stated that same-sex marriage is incompatible with Christian teachings.

This booklet may be comparable to the pamphlets distributed after Friday Prayers. It was about family values and stated that same-sex marriage is not considered sacred within Christianity.

This Lutheran bishop was subsequently reported to the police and prosecuted for propagating a discriminative discourse about homosexuals.

In Finland — if there are '*kyais*' (Muslim clerics) who don't want to marry two people of the same sex — in the future they might be punished by the state [shocked laughter]. This is extraordinary.

We have to look into these and other matters, for we have many resources and materials to draw upon in developing an Islamic discourse regarding women's issues....

Now, it's true that in this area we encounter many problems associated with our religious teachings. There are many texts and interpretations that might be considered to circumscribe women's roles, discriminate against women, and even portray women as sources of *fitnah* (strife) or as instigators of *fitnah*.

For example, it is sometimes said that women should not perform communal prayer in the mosque because this will lead to *fitnah*, and so on. Now, this requires further contemplation, which may occur within the framework of the recontextualization of religious teachings, as we are currently doing with *fiqh al-hadarah* (Islamic Jurisprudence for a Global Civilization). We need to clarify what contemporary norms regarding women were, when teachings emerged. Do these norms truly constitute a “*qath ‘r*” (absolute and unchanging) religious doctrine, or are they simply a question of culture?

Mr. Staquf's historic empowerment of women within Nahdlatul Ulama represents a significant expansion of his efforts to [recontextualize obsolete and problematic tenets of religious orthodoxy](#). The event on May 6 was one of [hundreds](#) of *halaqoh* organized by Nahdlatul Ulama over the past year to socialize *fiqh al-hadarah* throughout its vast network of over 28,000 Islamic boarding schools. What follows is the full English language transcript of Mr. Staquf's 38-minute speech, which may also be [viewed](#) in its original Indonesian.

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### **KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf Moves to Acknowledge and Empower Female *Ulama***

[Speaking in Arabic] May the peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you. Praise and thanks be to God, and may peace be upon the Messenger of God, our lord Muhammad Abd Allah (the Servant of God) and upon his family, companions, and followers.

[Speaking in Indonesian] Ladies and gentlemen, *kyais*, *nyais*, and *ulama* (male and female religious scholars). I have requested that [LBM General Secretary] Kyai Mahbub refer to the female invitees here today as “*nyai*,” for you are all well-versed in Islamic jurisprudence.

You are not women who — upon merely wearing a headscarf — are [erroneously] referred to as *ulama*. I am sure that the *nyais* present here today are, God willing, female *ulama* from an authentic Nahdlatul Ulama background.

To begin, let me welcome the Honorable Kyai Abun Bunyamin, NU's Chairman for West Java, who is accompanied by senior members of the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board. There is KH. Ulil Abshar Abdalla, the Chairman of Lakpesdam (NU's Institute for Study and Human Resource Development), Kyai Haji Mahbub Maafi [General Secretary of *Bahtsul Masa'il* — a division of Nahdlatul Ulama which addresses issues related to Islamic law], whose wife is master of ceremonies here today.

We are also joined today by someone of higher rank, the *kyai* whose name has the wrong *harakat* (Arabic diacritical vowels) — Kyai Sarmidi, Secretary of the Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council. I am certain, ladies and gentlemen, that his name should have been “Sarmada,” [Arabic for “eternal”] it's just that when you read his name without *harakat* you get “Sarmidi” [laughter from the audience].

Honorable friends from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the government of Purwakarta Regency. Praise be to God, this is an initiative I have long desired to implement: a council of experts comprised of women, that is capable of serving as a vehicle to consolidate female *ulama* from an NU background.

There are several considerations to mention in this regard. Firstly, the name “Nahdlatul Ulama” contains the Arabic word for scholars — *ulama*. What is meant by this is that NU is truly comprised of *ahli ilmu* (experts). *Ahli ilmu*, in this context, refers to those who are experts in *ulum al-din* (knowledge of religion). The *ulama* referred to by the term Nahdlatul Ulama, therefore, are *ulama al-din* — *ulama* who are true experts in the religious sciences. Therefore, this council will be comprised of true Islamic scholars.

There is a notion that the category of “*ulama*” should be expanded to include experts in various other domains. Frankly speaking, we can’t accept this idea, as it differs from the intentions of NU’s founders when they used the term “scholar.” We cannot, for example, appoint a scholar of mathematics to Nahdlatul Ulama’s Central Board unless that person is also a scholar of religion, which is what is meant by the term *ulama* in an NU environment.

So, that is the first consideration: We want to see female *ulama* develop a significant role within Nahdlatul Ulama. We want to see female Islamic scholars trained in an NU environment.

Over the years, several initiatives that claim to serve as vehicles for female *ulama* have come to my attention, but I have always wanted to ascertain whether these truly were female *ulama*, within NU, or not.

Today, praise be to God — with the help of Kyai Abun Bunyamin and Bahtsul Masa’il, led by Pak Mahbub Maafi — we have succeeded in launching this council [of female *ulama*].

The council will highlight the work of female scholars so that later, I’m sorry to say, male religious scholars will no longer have much of a role in Nahdlatul Ulama [laughter]. We’ll see what our women *ulama* are made of.

Ladies and gentlemen, here’s the thing: I have observed that there is a clear pattern when people discuss Islam in relation to ideas emanating from national or international socio-political and cultural dynamics. For example, there was a time when people would formulate claims about Islam’s pioneering role in various fields by taking positions that — at the very least — sought to harmonize the relationship between Islam and popular new ideas.

This occurred, for example, when a discourse about the superiority of science was ascendant. In my opinion, the ideas that developed around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries [in the Islamic world] were a response to a sense on the part of Ottoman Turkish civilization that it had been defeated by the superior achievements of its competitors, namely European civilization.

As scientific knowledge developed at breakneck speed in Europe and, later, Islamic civilization was defeated, a new claim emerged. This claim was that, in reality, Islam had been the pioneer of scientific knowledge. Similarly, whenever an “ism” emerged and become popular in some part of the world, it would be accompanied by a claim that Islam was, in fact, either compatible with — or indeed even a pioneer of — this fashionable “ism.”

When a popular discourse about democratization developed, claims appeared that Islam, too, promotes democracy. Various verses were found for the argument that Islam is, in fact, the champion of democracy. This process even occurred when socialism became popular among the newly independent states of the Islamic world, such as Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Umm Kulthum even released a song that praises the Prophet Muhammad — peace be upon him — and claims [speaking in Arabic] “you (Muhammad) are the Imam (leader) of the socialists.” The original poetry of this verse was written by [Egyptian poet laureate] Ahmed Shawqi, who was widely considered to be the best Egyptian poet, the president of Egyptian poets. Prophet Muhammad was claimed as the leader of socialism!

There is a clear tendency of this kind. I am unsure what type of psychology or mentality it originally emerged from, for this tendency has endured for an extremely long time.

Indeed, there are often stakeholders with certain needs and interests that they seek to use Islam to promote. This includes, for example, governments and certain other actors whenever they want to promote their agendas. To achieve their ends, they push Islam — and other religions — to develop discourses that support their agendas.

I myself — and, I believe, Pak Ulil [Abshar Abdalla] too — have been extremely active in various interfaith forums since the 1980s. In the 1990s and early 2000s, a tendency began to emerge whereby agendas that did not originate from within a religious environment started to be introduced and discussed within the context of interfaith dialogue. This was so that those secular agendas could be supported in the name of religion.

We can see, for example, how agendas such as climate change, inclusion, and so on have emerged outside of a religious environment and then been pushed into religious discourse. Frankly speaking, this isn't anything particularly new. In the 1980s, the Indonesian government's family planning agenda was pushed into religious environments to be discussed and legitimized in the name of religion. Indeed, Nahdlatul Ulama was extremely active in this matter, so much so that I can say NU was the main cause of the family planning program's success. [NU did this as] family planning is indeed recommended within Islam.

This tendency has morphed to encompass an increasingly diverse array of agendas. Suddenly, we are encouraged to promote the “Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) of disability,” or a discourse about the *fiqh* of SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals).

Now, the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board (PBNU) is promoting a discourse regarding Islamic Jurisprudence for a Global Civilization (*fiqh al-hadarah*), so I want to take this opportunity to explain that the logic of *fiqh al-hadarah* is different from this tendency to promote a *fiqh* for disability, a *fiqh* for climate change, a *fiqh* for SDGs and so on. The jurisprudence of family planning can be included within *fiqh al-hadarah* [as family planning is encouraged in Islam].

As for other discourses regarding *fiqh* that frequently appear, they frankly emerge from interest groups that are primarily concerned with legitimizing their secular agendas in the name of religion.

SDGs were not formulated by Islamic scholars. SDGs were first formulated by others, and then *ulama* and religious figures were called upon to support the SDGs and to collect religious argumentation that, more or less, can be presented as supporting SDGs, and so on.

Now, Islamic Jurisprudence for a Global Civilization is different, as the question of civilization is being examined from an Islamic perspective. We do not yet have a prescription for precisely what form this civilization should take. We must first explore the matter and then elaborate further. This is what we want to achieve in the future: we want to act in accordance with our own insights, namely the insights provided by *ahl al-sunnah wa-al-jama'ah* (Sunni Islam).

We want to examine problems that confront us and respond from the perspective of our own tradition — namely, by developing insights rooted in the traditions of *ahl al-sunnah wa-al-jama'ah* — and not merely echo talking points or ideologies concocted somewhere else. We want to assume responsibility for finding solutions to the real problems facing us.

That is why, ladies and gentlemen, I have told Muslimat [NU's adult women's organization] and Fatayat [NU's young adult women's organization] that they should not embrace secular feminism: precisely because feminism is an ideology and a set of ideas conceived outside of an Islamic environment. We don't need to run around looking for Islamic arguments to justify feminism. What for?

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During the World Cup, for example, there was a Moroccan football player [Achraf Hakimi] who scored a goal and then publicly embraced his mother and credited her for his success. Suddenly, a Dutch feminist figure, I forget her name, criticized Hakimi for this. She said "Don't glorify mothers, as women shouldn't be confined to just the role of being a mother." The writings of this Dutch feminist have become extremely popular. This is feminism.

Feminism subsequently developed to embrace "gender inclusivity," which entails demands for sexual equality in the name of justice. Then, the concept of gender itself morphed so that it was no longer a matter of biological differences, but also of sexual orientation, including LGBTQ and so on.

If we were to adopt secular feminist ideology, we would be guided by ideas nurtured outside of a religious environment. We don't need to follow these agendas, and we don't need to use fashionable labels to describe ideas that we develop in our Islamic environment.

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I regard this as an extremely important issue confronting the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board, which we must address. For various movements are active on the international stage, which aggressively seek to penetrate religious institutions such as Nahdlatul Ulama.

It is not only us who are being infiltrated and coming under pressure from these movements. Within the Anglican Communion, for example — that is, the Church of England (CoE) — there recently occurred an extraordinary schism when, all of a sudden, the central Anglican authority in England issued a *fatwa* (religious ruling) that allows the blessing of same-sex marriages within CoE churches. This move was rejected by Anglicans in Africa. Significantly, Anglicans in Africa vastly outnumber those who still practice this faith in England!

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We have to look into these and other matters, for we have many resources and materials to draw upon in developing an Islamic discourse regarding women’s issues.

The other day I was asked by Pak Ulil, “what do we really want to accomplish [through Islamic Jurisprudence for a Global Civilization], in regard to women?” I replied simply: “That women receive equal access to opportunities enabling them to develop their capacities. This is what [prominent female NU activists] Nyai Djuaesih and Nyai Siti Sarah demanded [during the 13th NU Congress in Menes, 1938].”

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Now, it's true that in this area we encounter many problems associated with our religious teachings. There are many texts and interpretations that might be considered to circumscribe women's roles, discriminate against women, and even portray women as sources of *fitnah* (strife) or as instigators of *fitnah*.

For example, it is sometimes said that women should not perform communal prayer in the mosque because this will lead to *fitnah*, and so on. Now, this requires further contemplation, which may occur within the framework of the recontextualization of religious teachings, as we are currently doing with Islamic Jurisprudence for a Global Civilization. In this case, we need to clarify what contemporary norms were, regarding women, at the time these teachings emerged. Do these norms truly constitute a "*qath'i*" (absolute and unchanging) religious doctrine, or are they simply a question of culture?

We can see important cultural differences even in our close surroundings. People from the island of Madura, for example, are often *ta'addud* (have many wives), and this is considered natural for Madurese, men and women alike, [speaking Arabic] "[even] two, or three, or four" (al-Qur'an 4:3) — in fact, the individual wives may even be changed. I don't know if Kyai Abun has more than one wife, but it's normal in Madura.

The situation is different here in West Java. It's even more different on the northern coast of Central Java. Extremely different. Once upon a time, there was an activity at an Islamic boarding school in northern coastal Java, and a number of *kyais* were gathered in the living room of Kyai *Fulan* (Kyai *so-and-so*), who is from the north coast of Central Java. I won't mention any names so as not to cause *fitnah*. Among the guests was a Madurese *kyai* who had multiple wives, *minal muta'addidin*. But Kyai *Fulan*, the host, had only one.

The Madurese *kyai* chided the others, saying "if our *kyais* were truly pious, they wouldn't be afraid of their old [first] wives, for isn't it the *sunnah* (path) of the Prophet to have many wives?"

Now, the living room in which the *kyais* were gathered was partitioned by a curtain, and from behind it Nyai *Fulan* (Kyai *so-and-so*'s wife) was listening to the Madurese *kyai* and shouted in Javanese "who vomited those words from his mouth!?" Hearing this, the Madurese *kyai* said, "Oh! If the culture here is like this [on the north coast of Central Java], I'd be terrified to take more than one wife too!"

[Uproarious laughter]

Here in Java, there is little issue regarding what role women can play. But culture is fluid, and so in another context not even women would accept a situation similar to ours here in Java.

I believe that the religious argumentation regarding women constituting a source of *fitnah* and the risk of *fitnah* need to be considered and clarified further.

Please consider that over the centuries, much has been written [on the subject of women] by male *ulama*. Now, what I want is for qualified *female ulama* to contribute *their* perspectives, as women. This will enable us to address potential problems, including the need to evaluate female activists' demands and weigh these against the need to build stable families. Again, I do not know whether these questions are matters of culture or religious doctrine; that still needs to be clarified.

Within an Indonesian cultural environment, all of us can clearly see that it will be difficult to build flourishing families without mothers playing the main role. If mothers cannot spend enough time with their families, this will be a problem. Now, this might not be a problem if fathers are able to spend more time with their children. Even then, there are many problems in advanced nations regarding whether women are entitled to receive equal pay for equal work. Some advanced industries are still not providing an equal wage to female workers. This is something that will ultimately have to be discussed.

Summing up, ladies and gentlemen, I have ordered Kyai Mahbub and LBM to create a genuine forum for female *ulama*. Male *ulama* have only been invited to this meeting, today, out of courtesy.

Secondly, let us build a unified activism that begins from our shared Islamic perspective and considers the real problems facing us, rather than simply adopting concepts born outside of a religious environment. It is my sincere wish that we build this [activism] within Nahdlatul Ulama.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to LBM, PBNU, Kyai Mahbub, Nyai Ala'i and our other colleagues, especially Kyai Abun Bunyamin — who provided the venue for this event. I hope that PP. al-Muhajirin is blessed for hosting this event, and we all hope that we, too, may partake in this blessing. We have all witnessed how PP. al-Muhajirin is indeed a blessing. May all those present here today receive a portion of this blessing. Amen.

Let us, together, open this study circle (*haloqah*) with good works, and may we be guided upon the *sunnah* (path) of our lord Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of God be upon him. I sincerely hope that our endeavors are beneficial, pleasing to God, and enjoy the blessings of Muhammad, the Prophet of God.

[In Arabic] To the chosen one, our sovereign and master, Muhammad — may the peace and blessings of God be upon him; to the blessed spirits of our shaykhs, and their shaykhs before them, especially the souls of Nahdlatul Ulama's founding fathers, He is aware of our desire that this prayer be heard and accepted. Everything is for God. [Let us recite] al-Fatihah:

I seek shelter in God from accursed Satan.

In the Name of God, the Most Beneficent, the Most Compassionate  
All praise is due to God alone, the Sustainer of all the worlds,  
the Most Beneficent, the Most Compassionate,  
Lord of the Day of Judgment!  
Thee alone do we worship; and unto Thee alone do we turn for aid.  
Guide us on the straight path  
the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings,  
not of those who have been condemned [by Thee],  
nor of those who go astray!

Amen.