Humanitarian Islam Movement Launches Arabic Website

New website introduces Humanitarian Islam to Arabic-speaking audiences across the Middle East and the Islamic world

"To restore the majesty of Islamic civilization, Muslims must renew religion itself by returning to the Prophet's original message of rahmah (universal love and compassion)"

~ H.E. KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf
General Chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board

Nahdlatul Ulama co-founder Kyai Haji Hasyim Asy'ari is pictured alongside the NU flag and point 15 of the *International Summit of Moderate Islamic Leaders (ISOMIL) Nahdlatul Ulama Declaration*, which reads:

"Nahdlatul Ulama calls upon people of goodwill of every faith and nation to join in building a global consensus not to politicize Islam, and to marginalize those who would exploit Islam in such a way as to harm others."

The three linked blue buttons, from right to left, state: "Read the Declaration"; "International Summit"; and "Watch CNN's Coverage." Two of the three buttons in the above banner link to Arabic translations of the documents in question.

JAKARTA, Indonesia and ALEXANDRIA, Egypt — Leaders of the world's largest Muslim organization have launched Bayt ar-Rahmah's website in Arabic, signaling a new phase in the expansion of Nahdlatul Ulama operations in the Middle East. The launch reflects rising interest in the Humanitarian Islam movement across the region following the December 2021 election of the movement's co-founder, H.E. KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf, to the Chairmanship of Nahdlatul Ulama's Central Board: the most senior executive position in the 100-million-plus Indonesian mass movement.

The launch of Bayt ar-Rahmah's Arabic website coincides with increasingly cordial and constructive relations between Nahdlatul Ulama and key Middle East power centers, including

Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. On 5 February 2024, the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity — a joint initiative of the Holy See, Egypt's al-Azhar University, and the Government of Abu Dhabi — presented the 2024 Zayed Award for Human Fraternity to Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah organizations for their "respective roles in the humanitarian field, as well as their peacebuilding efforts at the national, regional, and international levels." For two years running, the world's premier index of Muslim power and influence — *The Muslim 500*, headquartered in Amman, Jordan — has ranked Mr. Staquf among the 20 most influential Muslims on earth.

KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf addressing religious leaders, senior politicians, and a crowd of Nahdlatul Ulama cadres — including twelve thousand elite members of Banser, NU's eight-million-member militia — on 7 February 2023. Nearly two million people, including Indonesian President Joko Widodo, converged upon the small town of Sidoarjo in East Java to join Mr. Staquf in celebrating the 100th anniversary of Nahdlatul Ulama's founding, according to the Islamic *hijri* calendar.

The title on the banner reads: "Islamic Jurisprudence for a Global Civilization"

The three linked blue buttons, from right to left, state: "International Convention"; "Nahdlatul Ulama Centennial Proclamation"; and "National Campaign"

In November 2022, Mr. Staquf co-chaired the inaugural G20 Religion Forum (R20) International Summit of Religious Leaders with H.E. Shaykh Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Secretary General of the Mecca-based Muslim World League. At the following R20 International Summit of Religious Authorities (ISORA) in November 2023, Shaykh Al-Issa delivered an address via video in which he expressed his "thanks to my honorable brothers in Nahdlatul Ulama for our praiseworthy engagement and alliance," and his belief that the R20 constitutes "a concrete step towards peace on earth, harmony within nations, and an alliance that unites people of goodwill [within] a framework capable of bridging the rift between the world's diverse peoples and nations, enhancing friendship and cooperation between them."

KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf and Shaykh Mohammad Al-Issa during a bi-lateral meeting between the two Muslim leaders in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

In a further sign of Nahdlatul Ulama's burgeoning influence in the Middle East, in January 2024 Egypt's al-Azhar University — one of the oldest and most influential seats of learning in Sunni Islam — held an official celebration of the life and legacy of H.E. KH. Abdurrahman Wahid, Nahdlatul Ulama's long-time Chairman (1984 – 99) and Indonesia's first democratically elected president. Popularly known as "Gus Dur," Abdurrahman Wahid attended al-Azhar University in the 1960s. Wahid's vision, to help realize Indonesia's strategic potential as an engine of spiritual progress for all humanity, inspired the creation of the global Humanitarian Islam movement.

Al-Azhar celebrates the vision and legacy of former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid

At the celebrations, al-Azhar publicized its close and long-standing relationship with Nahdlatul Ulama, with prominent Azhari cleric and Advisor for Religious Affairs to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Dr. Osama al-Azhari, declaring that "al-Azhar considers Nahdlatul Ulama to be its sister organization, for NU employs the same classical Sunni religious methodology taught at al-Azhar al-Sharif."

Pope Francis and Grand Shaykh Ahmed al-Tayyeb of al-Azhar sign the *Document on Human Fraternity* as the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi — Shaykh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan — looks on

Nahdlatul Ulama's warm reception in the region comes after years of intense pressure by key Arab states — often in response to Western criticism, and revulsion, triggered by mass casualty attacks perpetrated by al-Qaeda and ISIS — for their religious establishments to promote moderate Islamic teachings, while ignoring and/or downplaying problematic tenets of Islamic orthodoxy employed by Islamist terror groups.

In February 2019, the Grand Shaykh of al-Azhar and Pope Francis jointly signed *A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The *Document on Human Fraternity* was drafted under the auspices of the Egyptian security services by a group of Egyptian public intellectuals who adopted a theological and conceptual framework first articulated by senior Nahdlatul Ulama leaders in the 1980s and further elaborated in the 2017 *Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Declaration on Humanitarian Islam*.

President Joko Widodo of Indonesia delivers the opening address at the 2019 National Conference of NU Religious Scholars, ("2019 Munas") in the presence of top theologians from Indonesia and the Middle East

Between February and March 2019, over 20,000 Nahdlatul Ulama scholars and their followers from all 34 of Indonesia's provinces gathered at Miftahul Huda al-Azhar Islamic Boarding School in Banjar, West Java, to attend the 2019 National Conference of NU Religious Scholars (*Musyawarah Nasional Alim Ulama NU*), or Munas. These scholars produced a detailed set of theological arguments in response to points 15 and 16 of the *ISOMIL Nahdlatul Ulama Declaration*, and the detailed road map to address obsolete and problematic tenets of Islamic orthodoxy outlined in the *Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Declaration on Humanitarian Islam*.

The 2019 Munas produced new *ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning) that declared the legal category of infidel (*kafir*) no longer relevant within Islamic law; ruled that Muslims have no religious obligation to establish an Islamic caliphate; theologically legitimized the nation state and laws derived from modern political processes; and established a religious obligation for Muslims to foster peace rather than wage war on behalf of their co-religionists, whenever conflict erupts between Muslim and non-Muslim populations anywhere in the world. These groundbreaking theological arguments — including Arabic translations of NU's legal analysis and rulings — can be accessed via the home page of the Arabic website (pictured below).

(Counter-clockwise from upper left) NU founders KH. Hasyim Asy'ari; KH. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah and KH. Bisri Syansuri, alongside Nahdlatul Ulama's 2019 leadership: KH. Miftachul Akhyar; KH. Said Aqil Siradj; KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf; and H. Helmy Faisal

The Arabic text reads: "God's way (*shariah*) is *rahmah* (universal love and compassion)."

The three linked buttons, from right to left, read: "The Recontextualization of Islamic Law and Transformation of the Prevailing 'Muslim Mindset,' for the Sake of World Peace"; "National Conference of NU Religious Scholars"; and "Nahdlatul Ulama's Ruling on Equal Citizenship"

Mr. Staquf accepts the 2024 Zayed Award for Human Fraternity on behalf of Nahdlatul Ulama at a ceremony in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Nahdlatul Ulama's pioneering role in recontextualizing obsolete and problematic tenets of Islamic orthodoxy has been welcomed by prominent Muslim intellectuals in the Middle East. Reporting on the historic First International Convention on Islamic Jurisprudence for a Global Civilization held in Surabaya, Indonesia on 6 February 2023, Mohamed Abu Al-Fadl — deputy editor of one of the oldest and most influential newspapers in the Arab world, Egypt's *al-Ahram* ("*The Pyramids"* est. 1875) — sharply criticized al-Azhar's failure to substantively engage with Nahdlatul Ulama's project to recontextualize Islamic teachings. Abu Al-Fadl's criticism reflects what many among Egypt's governing elites view as a lack of progress since President Abdel

Fattah al-Sisi called for a "religious revolution" before the assembled scholars of al-Azhar in an historic 2015 speech.

Dr. Abu Al-Fadl's article states that:

> On far too many religious occasions, al-Azhar's role is confined to a symbolic and moral one, and its avoidance of bold *ijtihad* in the realm of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) will lead to a reduction of its central relevance in the future and the squandering of an opportunity to strengthen its position within Egypt and abroad. For the opportunity to 'be in the room' in Indonesia and elsewhere — if seized — is enough to guarantee Cairo a central role in combatting classical ideas derived from sections of Islam's traditional corpus (*turath*), without discriminating between one era and another.
>
> The majority of Muslims look to the Arab world for guidance, but the failure of this region's *ulama* to keep up with the transformations taking place will lead to the rug being pulled out from under them. For the openness adopted by Nahdlatul Ulama and its new Chairman, Yahya Cholil Staquf, will not stop at borders, nor be confined to one specific country or region. Mr. Staquf is following in the footsteps of the late NU leader and former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid….
>
> The majority of the Arab and Islamic delegations at the First International Convention on Islamic Jurisprudence for a Global Civilization expressed a traditional mindset that has become outdated. For they dealt with the centenary of NU as if it were a carnival. The *ulama* and *shaykhs* did not take advantage of the opportunity to support the rejection of the caliphate and strengthen the shared bases for building a strong foundation for the civil state in regions that face an acute crisis with Islamist groups. If the leadership of religious institutions in the Arab world continue to insist on burying their heads in the sand, then Arab states may require another 100 years in order to absorb the project of Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia.

The launch of Bayt ar-Rahmah's Arabic website coincides with a growing realization among intellectuals, governments, and religious leaders across the Middle East that Nahdlatul Ulama — the largest independent civil society organization in the Muslim world — offers a successful alternative to what award-winning scholar of political Islam Ahmet T. Kuru refers to as the "mosque-state alliance," a failed governance paradigm that has kept much of the Muslim world trapped in a cycle of authoritarianism, underdevelopment, and violence for centuries.

Still image with Arabic subtitles from the film *The Divine Grace of Islam Nusantara* ("East Indies Islam")

On the eve of the 9/11 attacks' 20th anniversary, leading Arabic-language daily *Al-Arab* translated and prominently featured a hard-hitting article titled "The Taliban's control of Afghanistan spotlights the failed model of government in Muslim states." In the article, geopolitical analyst and Senior Fellow at National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute, Dr. James M. Dorsey, observed that "Nahdlatul Ulama, a politically influential civil society movement, is the only non-state player in what amounts to a battle for the soul of Islam that will determine the degree to which a moderate Islam incorporates principles of tolerance, pluralism, gender equality, secularism, and human rights as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

بيت الرحمة

الصفحة الرئيسية من نحن الإعلام البيانات الرسمية تصريحات أساسية اتصل بنا English

العرب

تحالف الدين والدولة يريده المتطرفون والمعتدلون على حد سواء في العالم الإسلامي

جيمس دورسي

الأربعاء، 08 سبتمبر، 2021

يعد استيلاء طالبان على أفغانستان نموذجا لحكم الفاشل في العالم الإسلامي على أساس تحالف عمره قرون بين العلماء المسلمين والدولة والذي يفسر التخلف في العديد من الدول ذات الأغلبية المسلمة والاستبداد في معظمها.

يسلط استحواذ حركة طالبان على الحكم الضوء على نضالات العالم الإسلامي لتحرير نفسه من قيود هي أصل العلل والمتمثلة أساسا في تحالف رجال الدين مع السلطة وهو ما يتناقض مع مبدأ الفصل بين الدين والسياسة.

وقد عبّر هذا النضال عن نفسه خلال العقد الأخير الذي شهد الاحتجاج والمعارضة والتحدي، وغالبا ما كان يلاقي قمعا وحشيا أو إخراج الثورات الشعبية عن مسارها، فضلا عن الهروب المدمر إلى تفسيرات الدين المتشددة والجهادية التي تفشل في إدراك أن وجهة نظرهم الراديكالية ليست سوى البديل الآخر من النموذج الفاشل.

ولا يختلف عنهم المناقسون الآخرون على القوة الناعمة الدينية، باستثناء نهضة العلماء، إحدى أكبر المنظمات الإسلامية في العالم، إن لم تكن أكبر منظمة إسلامية مقرها إندونيسيا، بغض النظر عن توجه رؤيتهم الدينية الأيديولوجية. لقراءة المقال كاملًا (PDF).

العرب | إسلام سياسي 13

تحالف الدين والدولة يريده المتطرفون والمعتدلون على حد سواء في العالم الإسلامي

سيطرة طالبان تسلط الضوء على فشل نموذج الحكم في الدول المسلمة

Dr. Dorsey's analysis appeared as a full-page feature in the "Political Islam" section of *Al-Arab* newspaper under the headline: "The Taliban's control of Afghanistan spotlights the failed model of government in Muslim states"

Translated into Arabic by Alexandria-based Egyptian scholar Eslam Saad Mohamed Eldadda, the Bayt ar-Rahmah website reflects the growing synergy between major Muslim institutions, governments, and civil society in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim majority democracy, and Middle East nations including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt — an ancient center of Islamic learning and culture in the heart of the Arab world, and its most populous state. Mr. Saad is an accomplished author and student of the late Dr. Ali Mabrouk (1961 – 2016), a Professor of Islamic Philosophy at Cairo University and one of the greatest Egyptian intellectuals of his generation. During the final years of his life, Dr. Mabrouk worked closely with Humanitarian Islam co-founders C. Holland Taylor and KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf.

The statue of an unknown Ptolemaic pharaoh stands at the entrance to Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria, Egypt. Completed in 2002, Bibliotheca Alexandrina was built to commemorate the greatest library of the ancient world and to affirm the enduring value of Egypt's ancient heritage.

Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Chairman H. Yaqut Cholil Qoumas (center) speaks to Indonesian media in May of 2017, following adoption of the *Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Declaration on Humanitarian Islam* by Nahdlatul Ulama's 8-million-member young adults organization. H. Alfa Isnaeni, the Commandant of Ansor's militia, Banser, stands to one side. The Arabic text is point 13 of the *Declaration*, which reads:

"If Muslims do not address the key tenets of Islamic orthodoxy that authorize and explicitly enjoin such violence, anyone—at any time—may harness the orthodox teachings of Islam to defy what they claim to be the illegitimate laws and authority of an infidel state and butcher their fellow citizens, regardless of whether they live in the Islamic world or the West."

The three linked buttons, from right to left, state: "Read the Declaration"; "Read the Political Communiqué"; and "Media Analysis"

> "If the great intellectual fires are reawakening within Islam, after centuries of torpor, then that will be the best weapon yet against extremism."
>
> ~ Nicholas D. Kristof, writing in the *New York Times*

An English translation of Bayt ar-Rahmah's mission statement, from its Arabic home page, may be read below.

BAYT AR RAHMAH

INSTITUTE FOR HUMANITARIAN ISLAM

CENTER FOR SHARED CIVILIZATIONAL VALUES

إعادة الحضارة الإسلامية لمجدها الأصيلة في قرن الواحد و العشرين

Restoring the Inherent Glory of Islamic Civilization in the 21st Century

Islam is the religion of Truth, which Allah entrusted to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) so that he might share its precious, transformative effect with all people and lead them out of ignorance and darkness towards the light, uniting humanity in submission to His will in all things, in this world and the next.

"إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأُتَمِّمَ صَالِحَ الأَخْلاقِ" ~ حديث نبوي

"I have been sent only to perfect the moral framework [of humanity]."

~ Hadith, *Sahih Muslim*

And yet today the Islamic world is divided and in crisis. Since the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924/27 Rajab 1342 AH, many movements have arisen to unite Muslims, including Islamism, Arabism and Secularism. All of these movements have failed, only serving to divide humanity still further.

To restore the majesty of Islamic civilization, Muslims must renew religion itself by returning to the Prophet's original message of *rahmatan li al-'alamin* (universal love and compassion).

"وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ" ~ القرآن الكريم، سورة الأنبياء : 107

"And We [God] sent you [Muhammad] for no purpose other than to be a blessing for all creation (*rahmatan lil-'ālamīn*)." ~ Qur'an, 21:107

For in recent years, Islamic *da'wah* (proselytism) has been violating the principles advocated by the noble Prophet Muhammad (pbuh.). The Prophet advised those who proselytize to make things easy for other people, not cause them to flee in terror.

"ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُم بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ" ~ القرآن الكريم، سورة النحل : 125

"Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation. And dispute with them in the most virtuous manner. Surely thy Lord is He Who knows best those who stray from His way, and He knows best the rightly guided."

~ Qur'an, 16:125

This is the mission of the global Humanitarian Islam movement: to restore *tawheed* (the Unicity of Being) and *rahmah* (universal love and compassion) to their rightful place as the primary message of Islam and work together with people of every faith and nation to prevent the politicization of religion, abolish the primordial cycle of hatred, tyranny, and violence that plagues humanity, and thereby avert civilizational disaster.

View an English-language Site Map of the Arabic website.