

Subtle Apolitical Message from the Pope's Visit to Indonesia

News:

Earlier September, Pope Francis visited Indonesia, where he delivered a speech in Istiqlal Masjid- the largest mosque in the country. Together with the grand imam, they signed the “Joint Declaration of Istiqlal 2024,” which, as its subtitle reveals, aimed at apparently “fostering religious harmony for the sake of humanity”- addressing two of the “serious crises” in today’s world: “dehumanization and climate change.” The Pope also visited the front section of Silaturahmi Tunnel, which connects Istiqlal Mosque and Jakarta Cathedral, symbolizing religious harmony in Indonesia.

Comment:

It is undeniable that the Pope was rather becoming a popular figure for some Indonesian people, the largest Muslim country. His visit to Indonesia was also enthusiastically welcomed even by the younger generation. His modest figure with a modest appearance and travel facilities, where he is portrayed as a religious leader and fighter for justice certainly has hidden agenda. The anti-power attitude of the Pope seems to dictate to Muslims in Indonesia about humility and responsibility behind the mandate of leaders; where the message is very clear that: the most important qualification for a leader is not wanting to be a leader.

The apolitical message was further evident on the third day of his visit, when Pope Francis was welcomed by Grand Imam Nasaruddin Umar at the Istiqlal Mosque on September 5 and signed the Joint Declaration of Istiqlal 2024. The BBC reported the contents of this declaration with a rather tendentious angle: The Istiqlal 2024 Declaration is 'sad and contrasting' amidst religious organizations receiving mining permits which are Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. This emphasizes the impression that religious actors actually support dehumanization and environmental crises due to their involvement in political economic schemes.

Religion must stay away from politics. This is the main message. BBC as a secular media that leans towards Western values deliberately frames that if religion enters the realm of political economy then it will actually strengthen environmental destruction and dehumanization. This is in addition to the personal glorification of the Pope carried out by veteran secular media in Indonesia; that the Pope is considered a holy man who fights for justice, with a modest lifestyle and close to the poor - a stark contrast to the political conditions in Indonesia which are full of oligarchic lust for power. Where the Indonesian political stage continues to show cheap theater of family dynasties with blatant manipulation of the law.

The Pope's apolitical message is clear, politics is dirty and religion is sacred, therefore do not bring religion into the realm of politics including the realm of strategic economics! So, this is the same as saying that Islamic rules are prohibited from entering the political and economic arenas. Very secular. This way of thinking is certainly dangerous because it contradicts Islam which teaches that political leadership for Muslims is an inherent part of its civilization.

As a result, this subtle message will actually worsen the spiritual and political decline of the Ummah and will strengthen secularism. Islam rejects secularism or the separation of religion and politics. The corruption of Muslim leaders in Indonesia has nothing to do with Islamic teachings because their incompetence was created by the ‘jahiliyyah’ man-made system that denied Allah's laws in political and economic aspects. There is no aspect of our lives that is not covered by Islamic law. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَأَنْ أَحْكَمَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَاحْذَرْهُمْ أَنْ يَفْتِنُوكَ عَنْ بَعْضِ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ﴾ **“So judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their desires over the truth that has come to you.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:48].

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