

## RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE IN CHANGING INDONESIA: The Political Struggle and Movement of Hidayatullah

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### Abstract

*This article seeks to endeavors and strategies of an Islamic organization, Hidayatullah, to survive in changing political regimes in the New Order to Reformation period of Indonesia. It was established as an Islamic educational and dakwah (Islamic proselytizing) institution in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, in 1973. Despite socio-political changes in the country, it has expanded to several provinces in Indonesia which transformed it to become the largest Islamic educational institution with 402 branches of Islamic schools. The organization focuses its activities on Islamic education and dakwah through various ways including printed media such as Suara Hidayatullah magazine, distributed weekly to its branches, mosques, and schools. Based on a literature review of Suara Hidayatullah magazine and interviews with Hidayatullah prominent figures, this article delves into the struggles and movement of Hidayatullah through its dynamics and transformation in socio-political changes in Indonesia. This article argued that in political dynamics and transformation within Hidayatullah organization show the resistance and resilience to survive in the socio-political crisis of Suharto's New Order era (1966-1998), which discriminated*



*against Islam as a political ideology and in the aftermath of reformation. One of the strategies to comply with the political repressions is to declare Hidayatullah as an Islamic organization like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah in 2000. This transformation process proves Hidayatullah's strategic foresight and adaptability in socio-cultural and political changes.*

*[Artikel ini mengkaji tentang upaya dan strategi Organisasi Islam Hidayatullah dalam bertahan di tengah kontestasi rezim politik di Indonesia sejak Orde Baru sampai reformasi. Dalam sejarahnya, Hidayatullah didirikan di Balikpapan, Kalimantan Timur pada tahun 1973. Meskipun terjadi perubahan sosial-politik di negara ini, lembaga ini telah berkembang pesat ke berbagai provinsi dengan 402 cabang sekolah Islam di seluruh Indonesia. Salah satu corong dakwah organisasi ini adalah majalah Suara Hidayatullah, yang didistribusikan setiap minggu ke cabang-cabang, masjid, dan sekolah-sekolah. Artikel ini—melalui kajian literatur majalah Suara Hidayatullah dan wawancara dengan tokoh Hidayatullah—mengkaji pergulatan dan pergerakan Hidayatullah sebagai lembaga pendidikan sekaligus dakwah dalam konteks perubahan sosial-politik di Indonesia. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa organisasi Hidayatullah menunjukkan resistensi dan ketahanan dalam krisis sosial-politik di era Orde Baru (1966-1998) yang mendiskriminasikan Islam sebagai ideologi politik dan pasca reformasi. Salah satu strategi untuk menghadapi penindasan politik tersebut adalah dengan mendeklarasikan Hidayatullah sebagai organisasi massa Islam seperti Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) dan Muhammadiyah pada tahun 2000. Proses transformasi ini membuktikan kejelian dan kemampuan adaptatif Hidayatullah di tengah tekanan dan pasang-surut sosial-budaya dan politik.]*

**Keywords:** *Hidayatullah Movement, Resistance and Resilience, Political Change, Indonesia*

## **Introduction**

The study of Islamic mass organizations in Indonesia has been mainly divided into two dichotomies of moderate and extreme. Nahdlatul

Ulama (NU)<sup>1</sup> and Muhammadiyah,<sup>2</sup> representing the moderate, and Salafism<sup>3</sup> and Wahhabism<sup>4</sup> acting the extreme have gained scholarly attention.<sup>5</sup> This article highlights Hidayatullah as an Islamic education (*tarbiyah*) and Islamic proselytizing (*dakwah*) movement, and an Islamic mass organization that is beyond the dichotomies. Hidayatullah has been rarely discussed, at least in English literature, since it operates between moderate and extreme discursive tradition and political movement focusing on social and cultural domains with *tarbiyah* and *dakwah* agendas by establishing *pesantren* and sending Islamic preachers (*ustaz*) to isolated areas in the Nusantara.<sup>6</sup> The studies of Hidayatullah movement are mostly in Indonesian and focus on its educational system and *dakwah* printed media of *Suara Hidayatullah* magazine.<sup>7</sup> This articles focuses on

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Turhan Yani et. al., "Advancing the Discourse of Muslim Politics in Indonesia: A Study on Political Orientation of Kiai as Religious Elites in Nahdlatul Ulama," *Helikon* 8, no. 12 (2022): e12218, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S240584402203506X>.

<sup>2</sup> Nada Ramadhana, Mualimin, Shakhzod Tokhirov, "From New Media to New Piety: The Construction of Muhammadiyah Digital Piety Ideas," *Digital Muslim Review* 01, no. 02 (2023), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32678/dmr.v1i2.9>.

<sup>3</sup> Asep M. Iqbal, "Internet, Identity and Islamic Movements: The Case of Salafism in Indonesia," *Islamika Indonesiana* 01, no. 01 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.15575/isin.v1i1.42>.

<sup>4</sup> Wakhi and Hadi Ismail, "Religious Extremism: Research on the Ideology of the Wahhabi Islamic Movement," *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research* 06, no. 01 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i01.13080>.

<sup>5</sup> Denny Febriansyah and Dawoud Sudqi El-Alami, "Moderate Islam vis-a-vis Salafism in Indonesia: An Ideological Competition," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 29, no. 01 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.21580/ws.29.1.7212>.

<sup>6</sup> Paul J. Carnegie, Bianca J. Smith, and Saipul Hamdi, "The Recovery of a Non-Violent Identity for an Islamist *Pesantren* in an Age of Terror," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 69, no. 6 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2015.1058339>.

<sup>7</sup> Taufik Hidayat et. Al., "Pengkaderan dan Dakwah sebagai Basis Gerakan: Studi Kasus Ormas Hidayatullah," *Jurnal Ilmu Agama: Mengkaji Doktrin, Pemikiran, dan Fenomena Agama* 23, no. 01 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.19109/jia.v23i1.13026>; Pajrun Kamil, "Peran Dakwah Melalui Media Cetak untuk Pengembangan Masyarakat Islam," *Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi* 03, no. 02 (2018); Hikmah and Zainap Hartati, "Kontribusi Pondok *Pesantren* Hidayatullah Bagi Masyarakat Palangka Raya," *Al-Fikri: Jurnal Studi dan Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 04, no. 02 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.30659/jspi.v4i1.16270>.

the political maneuvers and strategies of Hidayatullah to deal with the changing regimes from the New Order to the reformation periods to fill the gap of the studies of Islamic mass organizations.

The establishment of Hidayatullah organization was initiated by Abdullah Said, a prominent leader of Muhammadiyah in Makassar in 1966. In 1970, he, accompanied by his several Muhammadiyah fellow activists in Makassar moved to Balikpapan. They were chased by the local police after forcefully banning the gambling activities in Makassar. With the assistance of local Muhammadiyah members, he established a Training Center (TC) Darul Arqam in East Kalimantan in 1970 and 1972. On February 5, 1973, he established an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) in Karang Bugis, Balikpapan. This *Pesantren* became the headquarters of Hidayatullah in Balikpapan.<sup>8</sup> The development of Hidayatullah has also penetrated several districts and provinces in the archipelago covering 402 cities today.<sup>9</sup> Hidayatullah *pesantren* institution was founded with an Islamic charity (*wakaf*) of land approximately five hectares in the village Gunung Tembak in Karang Bugis, East Kalimantan.<sup>10</sup> Abdullah Said was presented *Kalpataru* Award by President Suharto for the innovative transformation of Gunung Tembak into a green and clean educational area in 1984.<sup>11</sup> After 30 years of focusing on *dakwah* agendas through education, Hidayatullah was declared as an Islamic mass organization in its first congress meeting on July 9-13, 2000. It changed its structure into the three highest organizational bodies: Sharia Council, *Syuro* Council, and Executive Board (DPP). Subsequent coordination by DPP Hidayatullah,

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<sup>8</sup> Hasanul Rizqa, "Ustaz Abdullah Said, Sang Pejuang Dakwah," *Republika*, September 19, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Murodi, "Shifting Dakwah Methods to Match Media Technology Transformation," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 18, no. 01 (2023).

<sup>10</sup> Saipul Hamdi, Paul J. Carnegie, "The Recovery of a Non-Violent Identity for an Islamist *Pesantren* in an Age of Terror."

<sup>11</sup> Abdurrohim, "Ideologi Pendidikan Islam *Pesantren*: Kajian Konsep Ideologi Pendidikan Islam dan Implementasinya di *Pesantren* Hidayatullah Balikpapan" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2014).

based in Jakarta, formed DPW (Regional Council) in all provincial cities. Furthermore, each DPW formed a DPD (District Council). The villages also formed a board of twigs.<sup>12</sup>

One of Hidayatullah's most notable successes is its pioneering role in promoting *dakwah* through the press. *Suara Hidayatullah* magazine, among others like *Suara Muhammadiyah*, is a progressive symbol of modernity.<sup>13</sup> Their success in expansion has shifted to a *pesantren* with networking spanning across Indonesia. Hidayatullah is one of the Islamic mass organizations based on *pesantren* and cadre that developed rapidly from the New Order era to the post-reform era. Hidayatullah *Pesantren* is a spectacular example of complete community development since almost all devices start at zero.<sup>14</sup> It is known that this *pesantren* stands through the striving stage of struggle, the teachings to convince the citizens and government of Balikpapan. Finally, with the support of the citizens and local government of Balikpapan, this institution can stand and develop a network of the city across the island of Borneo. This institution could develop its branches throughout Indonesia.

This article seeks to discuss the dynamics and transformation of the Hidayatullah organization in the changing political regimes of Indonesia. This article employs a qualitative based on primary and secondary data. Primary data are collected through literature review and interviews with Hidayatullah figures, while secondary data is collected through *Suara Hidayatullah* Magazine and other supporting documents. The article begins with a discussion about the shift of Hidayatullah from *tarbiyah* and *dakwah*

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<sup>12</sup> Robert W. Hefner, "Islamic Schools, Social Movements, and Democracy in Indonesia," in *Making Modern Muslims*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, "Traditionalist and Islamist *Pesantrens* in Contemporary Indonesia," in *The Madrasa in Asia: Political Activism and Transnational Linkages*, ed. Farish A Noor, Yoginder Sikand, and Martin van Bruinessen (Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 217–246.

<sup>14</sup> Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam: Interpretasi Untuk Aksi* (Bandung: Mizan, 1991), 262.

movements to an Islamic mass organization. Further, it elaborates on the allegation of radicalism against Hidayatullah which forces its leaders to redefine their positions in changing socio-political circumstances during the transition periods of reformation.

### **Transformation of Hidayatullah**

The transformation of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* operates in two mechanisms. First, the shift of leadership from a charismatic figure, Abdullah Said, to organizational or managerial leadership which involves various figures in the institution. This change has accelerated the development of Hidayatullah significantly. Second, the declaration of Hidayatullah as an Islamic mass organization from an educational institution. This change has leveled Hidayatullah to NU and Muhammadiyah. This transformation began when the founder of Hidayatullah, Abdullah Said, fell ill in 1996, other leading figures in the central board of Hidayatullah agreed to form a transitional leadership pattern consisting of a fifteen-member Leadership Council (*Dewan Pimpinan Hidayatullah*/DPH). In this council, Abdurrahman Muhammad was elected as a temporary general chairman of Hidayatullah during Abdullah Said's treatment.<sup>15</sup> The transitional leadership council was officially announced in August 1997 to all branches of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in a National Meeting (*Silaterrahim Nasional*/*Silatnas*) to prevent the conflict and division of Hidayatullah branches.<sup>16</sup>

This transitional leadership system prevalent until the death of Abdullah Said on Thursday, March 5, 1998, was crucial in preventing a leadership crisis. Abdurrahman Muhammad was appointed by the majority of the leaders to replace Abdullah Said as General Chairman Hidayatullah. Under his leadership, Hidayatullah *Pesantren* formed three

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<sup>15</sup> Ali Athwa, "Kolom Ta'aruf," *Suara Hidayatullah*, 05-IX (Jakarta, September 1996).

<sup>16</sup> Ali Athwa, "Kolom Ta'aruf," *Suara Hidayatullah*, 06-X (Jakarta, October 1997), 86.

leadership units including the Congress Council (*Dewan Syuro*), Fatwa Council, and Executive Board. Abdul Halim was elected as chairman of the Congress Council, Usman Palese as the chairman of the *Fatwa* Council, and A. Hasan Ibrahim as the chairman of the Executive Council. Additionally, M. Hasyim was appointed as the Head of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Balikpapan, which was then called the Central Special Territory (*Wilayah Khusus Pusat*).<sup>17</sup>

As mentioned above, the shift of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* from an educational institution to an Islamic mass organization was decided through the National Congress (*Munas*) I on 9-13 July 2000. This shift introduced the great jargon of building Islamic civilization. As a mass organization, Hidayatullah's membership is open, and the branches of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* that have spread throughout Indonesia become Hidayatullah's charity institution as an organization managed autonomously by Hidayatullah cadres with the new organization rules.<sup>18</sup> One of the results of *Munas* I was to establish Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Balikpapan as a national project under the direct leadership of DPP Hidayatullah. Due to various constraints and limitations, finally, DPP Hidayatullah restored the top leader of Hidayatullah to the position of General Chairman (*Rais Aam*), Abdurrahman Muhammad.

Based on the Supervisory Board deliberations in Balikpapan, on March 3, 2003, Abdul Qadir Jailani was appointed as Chairman of the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Balikpapan. In less than 2 years of leadership, on January 1, 2005, Hidayatullah General Manager in Balikpapan, transferred the *Pesantren's* management to young cadres.<sup>19</sup> Hidayatullah General Chairman Abdurrahman Muhammad appointed Nashirul Haq,

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<sup>17</sup> Ruswan Thoyib, "Artikulasi Ideologi Gerakan Salafiah dalam Pendidikan *Pesantren* Hidayatullah" (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2008), 116–117.

<sup>18</sup> M. Falikul Isbah, "Public Fundraising for Financing Islamic Education and Dakwa Mission," *DINIKA: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 03, no. 01 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.22515/dinika.v3i1.1224>.

<sup>19</sup> Yayasan Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah, *Profil Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah Pusat Balikpapan*, n.d.



an alumnus of Islamic senior high school (*Madrasah Aliyah*) Hidayatullah *Pesantren* and the first generation who graduated from the Islamic University of Madinah for his bachelor's degree and National University of Malaysia for his master degree.

In the first National Conference, the founder of the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Surabaya branch, Abdul Rahman, was elected as Chairman of the DPP Hidayatullah period 2000-2005. In the second National Conference in 2005 in Jakarta, one of the early students at Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Balikpapan, namely Abdul Mannan, was elected as the Chairman of DPP Hidayatullah from 2005 to 2010 and was re-elected as the Chairman of the DPP from 2010 to 2015 at the Third National Conference in 2010 in Makassar. In the Fourth National Conference in 2015, Nashirul Haq was elected as Chairman of DPP Hidayatullah Period 2015-2020. Since the first National Congress in Balikpapan, Hidayatullah as a mass organization also has an autonomous institution such as "Syabab Hidayatullah," which is a forum for Hidayatullah youth activists, in addition also formed Mushida (Muslimat Hidayatullah), which is a forum for Hidayatullah women activists.<sup>20</sup>

By becoming a mass organization, the leadership of Hidayatullah is only continuing the humanity programs that Abdullah Said pioneered. Its three primary programs are education, *dakwah*, and social activities. In education, through charitable efforts in the form of foundations (*yayasan*) spread throughout Indonesia, Hidayatullah developed Islamic educational institutions.<sup>21</sup> At present, in addition to the Islamic educational institutions of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Balikpapan, Islamic educational institutions in Hidayatullah *Pesantren* branches in Surabaya, Malang, Yogyakarta, Jakarta, Makassar, and Timika have progressed rapidly.

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<sup>20</sup> Pambudi Utomo, "Kolom Ta'aruf," *Suara Hidayatullah*, 04-XIII (Jakarta, August 2000), 74.

<sup>21</sup> H. Hajam, "Sufferance within a Cultural Framework as the Preaching Strategy of Sunan Gunung Jati in Forming a Civil Society," *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 12, no. 04 (2021).



In *dakwah*, Hidayatullah organization in each region forms the *Dakwah* Center, which accommodates activities in urban and rural areas. For example, the *Dakwah* Center institution in Balikpapan has a routine recitation program from urban to rural areas. In addition, this institution regulates the assignment of Hidayatullah *ustaz* who served as preacher of Friday prayers to the prayers of the feast. Not only by oral preaching, long before becoming a mass organization, Hidayatullah *Pesantren*, since 1982, has published a *Dakwah* Bulletin for the Balikpapan Muslim community, which on December 15, 1986, obtained the Registered Letter (STT) through the License of the Ministry of Information and changed his name to Suara Hidayatullah. In 1999, the magazine obtained the other registered license letter, SIUPP (*Surat Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers*) from the Minister of Information of the Republic of Indonesia, and *Suara Hidayatullah* Magazine progressed rapidly. The monthly magazine cover has reached 50,000 copies throughout Indonesia, from Banda Aceh to Merauke.<sup>22</sup> In addition to preaching through magazines, Hidayatullah has managed several internet sites as a medium of communication and preaching through cyberspace since 1997, namely *www.hidayatullah.com*, which, after becoming a mass organization, was then modified to *www.hidayatullah.or.id*.

In the social domain, Hidayatullah has Baitul Maal Hidayatullah (BMH). This institution manages the crowdfunding including *zakat* (endowment), *infaq* (charity), *sadakah* (almsgiving), and *wakaf* from Muslims in Indonesia.<sup>23</sup> As a form of public trust building and government approval towards Hidayatullah, BMH received recognition as a national endowment operator (*amil zakat*) institution through the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs RI No. 538 in 2001. Today,

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<sup>22</sup> Manshur Salbu, *Mencetak Kader; Perjalanan Hidup Ustadz Abdullah Said Pendi Hidayatullah* (Surabaya: Suara Hidayatullah Publishing, 2009), 59.

<sup>23</sup> Indah Piliyanti and Agni Alam Awirya, "Promoting Islamic Philanthropy in Islamic Higher Education of Indonesia," in *Islamic Philanthropy*, ed. Abdul Ghafar Ismail & Rose Abdullah & Muhammad Hasbi Zaenal (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

BMH has 30 representative branches and 144 postal care networks throughout Indonesia.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to establishing an *amil zakat* institution, Hidayatullah also empowered social orphanages established in all branches of the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* before becoming a mass organization. The orphanage is renamed the Shalih Children's Education Center (PPAS) today. Hidayatullah also established non-profit institutions for health services, Islamic Medical Service (IMS), and Hidayatullah Search and Rescue (SAR), which has received recognition from the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights.

### Hidayatullah and Allegation of Radicalism

In the aftermath of the terrorist attack of 9/11 event in 2001, Western media gave a new stigma to Islam as a religion of violence and terrorism.<sup>25</sup> This has an impact on Islamic education, which has been accused of being anti-Western. Islamic education was accused of breeding violence and terrorism.<sup>26</sup> *Pesantren* was framed as the basis of terrorism and the United States requested it to renew its curriculum.<sup>27</sup> Among the *Pesantren* in Indonesia accused by the Western media as a “terrorist” is Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Balikpapan. The accusations came a few months

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with M. Mundzir, The Branch Leader of BMH East Kalimantan, Friday, April 20, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Abdullah Saeed, “Jihad and Violence: Changing Understanding of Jihad Among Muslim,” in *Terrorism and Justice: Moral Argument in a Threatened World*, ed. Tony Coady and Michael O’Keefe (Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 72. The definition of terrorism according to the US Department of Defense is: *The calculated use of violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies as to pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious or ideological*. See <http://www.azdema.gov>.

<sup>26</sup> Abdullah Saeed, “Islamic Religious Education and The Debate on Its Reform Post-September 11,” in *Islam and the West*, ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh & Samina Yasmeen (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2005), 63.

<sup>27</sup> Greg Fealy and Anthony Bubalo, *Jejak Kafilah, Pengaruh Radikalisme Timur Tengah di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 2007), 70.

after the events of September 11.<sup>28</sup>

The accusation stems from the arrival of a *New York Times* journalist, Jane Perlez, who observed and interviewed the santri and teachers to learn more about Hidayatullah *Pesantren* activities. Jane Perlez's visits lasted three days and stayed at the *pesantren*. After a while, an article titled Carefully Taught to Hate the United States appeared in the United States. His article argues that the santri were taught to hate the United States. The article published on page 1 told how the students at Hidayatullah *Pesantren* taught to hate the United States. "From the bottom of my heart, I say that the United States is a ghost," wrote Perlez in his article based on his interview with Muhammad Fadhli (16), one of the santri of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Balikpapan.<sup>29</sup>

Allegations grew stronger when another article appeared in the September 17, 2002, edition of *Times Magazine*. The article is titled *Confession of an Al-Qaeda Terrorist*, accompanied by a photo of Umar Al Faruq in addition to the title. However, *Times* magazine did not directly mention the name Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Balikpapan. They simply said that the CIA, based on the results of its investigation, found three militant Islamist militants on the island of Borneo, including Al-Faruq, who set up a terrorist camp and staged war games.

However, according to a CIA document that has been widely circulated in the Indonesian mass media, in addition to the three militant fighters, previously four members of the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI) did the same in the *pesantren*. They are Yasin Syawal, Umar Al Faruq, Nasir, and Aris Munandar.<sup>30</sup> The Hidayatullah *Pesantren* later denied the allegation.<sup>31</sup> The board of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Balikpapan did not

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<sup>28</sup> Pambudi Utomo (ed.), *Hidayatullah Sarang Teroris?* (Jakarta: Pustaka Inti, 2004), xii.

<sup>29</sup> Mahladi, "Mengintip 'Camp Teroris' Tudingan CIA," *Republika*, 2002.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>31</sup> Muhammad Prayoga Permana, *Tolerating Religious Intolerance: The State and The Revival of Islamic Fundamentalism in Indonesia*, 2013, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/213853396.pdf>.

deny that people named Yassin Syawal and Aris Munandar had visited Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in January 2001 on behalf of the Crisis Committee (Kompak) to report on the condition of the Muslims in Poso. The arrival of the Kompas activist is closely related to the fate of the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* branch in Poso and Masohi (Ambon), which was affected by the conflict in the two cities.<sup>32</sup>

With news from foreign media, such as *The New York Times* and *Times Magazine*, based in the United States, Hidayatullah *Pesantren* was put into the spotlight of mass media in Indonesia. Among them are *Kaltim Post*, Tuesday-Wednesday 29-30 October 2002; *Jawa Pos*, Tuesday, November 12, 2002; *Tempo Magazine*, December 1, 2002; and *Republika*, November 10, 2002. This phenomenon raises the pros and cons in society. However, support in the form of defense against the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* emerged from local leaders and officials such as K.H. Syarwani Zuhri (Head of MUI and NU Balikpapan), Awang Farouk (East Kalimantan Governor), Farid Wajdi (Deputy Governor of East Kalimantan), Imdaad Hamid (Mayor of Balikpapan), recalled the history of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* who never had any connection with the terrorist movement in East Kalimantan.<sup>33</sup>

This allegation finally led the Research and Development Agency and Religious Training of MoRA with the Islamic State Institute (IAIN) Antasari Banjarmasin to conduct field research from 30 August to November 19, 2003, at Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Balikpapan. From the result of the study, Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Balikpapan is declared clean of the allegations and has no connection, either ideologically or organizationally, with the terrorist movement in Indonesia.<sup>34</sup> MHR Songge from CIDES Jakarta also researched civil society, which is strengthening in Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Balikpapan. However, this

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<sup>32</sup> Pambudi Utomo (ed.), *Hidayatullah Sarang Teroris?*, 75.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>34</sup> Research Team, *Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah Balikpapan* (Banjarasin: Pusat Penelitian IAIN Antasari, 2003).

strengthening is not affiliated with terror activities in Indonesia.<sup>35</sup>

In contrast to the research from outside these research institutes, the negative stigma that Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Balikpapan has associated with global terrorism has not entirely disappeared. For example, in 2003, the International Crisis Group (ICG), a Brussels-based research institute based in Jakarta, published a report entitled “*Jamaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: Damage but Still Dangerous*,” which states that Hidayatullah is a network terrorist *Jamaah Islamiyah* (JI) based on *pesantren*.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, Zachary Abuza, an expert on terrorism in Southeast Asia, categorizes Hidayatullah *Pesantren* and its branches in Kalimantan and Sulawesi as an incubator of Islamic terrorists along with the al-Mukmin Ngruki *Pesantren* in Surakarta, Dar us-Shahadah *Pesantren* in Boyolali, al-Islam *Pesantren* in Lamongan, and Ihya as-Sunnah *Pesantren* in Yogyakarta.<sup>37</sup>

The allegation addressed to Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Balikpapan and its branches has disrupted the *dakwah*, education, and social activities established between *pesantren* and the community. One of *pesantren*'s adverse effects is the breakdown of financial assistance from donors and workers in foreign companies in Balikpapan. Similarly, after the economic crisis hit Indonesia before the Suharto regime collapsed in 1998, the monetary business units in the *pesantren* were also affected, not only suffered losses but also lost routine income.<sup>38</sup> The psychological impact is that the leadership and boarding board ranks are always overwhelmed if the accusation re-emerged. However, since President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono arrived at Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Balikpapan in 2009, the

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<sup>35</sup> Pambudi Utomo (ed.), *Hidayatullah Sarang Teroris?*, 19.

<sup>36</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), “*Jamaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: Damage but Still Dangerous*,” in *Asia Reports*, vol. 63 (Jakarta/Brussels: ICG Asia Reports, 2003).

<sup>37</sup> Zachary Abuza, “Uncivil Islam,” in Sharif Shuha, “Gauging *Jamaah Islamiyah*'s Threat in Southeast Asia,” in *Terrorism Monitor*, 21 April. (Washington, D.C.: The Jamestown Foundation, 2005), 31.

<sup>38</sup> Arief Subhan, “*Pesantren Hidayatullah: Madrasah-Pesantren Independen Bercorak Salafi*,” in *Mencetak Muslim Modern: Peta Pendidikan Islam Indonesia*, ed. Jajat Burhanuddin and Dina Afrianty (Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo Persada, 2006), 205.

board of leaders has become increasingly convinced that the negative stigma that ever befell them has faded by itself with the president's arrival.

### **Hidayatullah in the Social and Political Changes**

One thing that makes Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Balikpapan known to the public is its expansion into other areas by making representation branches. Manshur Salbu notes that the thought of expanding the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* wing to different places in East Kalimantan has existed since a year after Hidayatullah *Pesantren* was established in Gunung Tembak district. The process of Hidayatullah's *Pesantren* expansion was carried out by the alums of the preacher's cadre training conducted at the Hidayatullah *Pesantren*. The method of assigning preachers to preach to remote areas in East Kalimantan has been used since 1975.<sup>39</sup> From this, it can be seen that the early mainstream of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* is the *Islamiyah* propagation movement due to the onslaught of Christianization and industrialization in East Kalimantan in particular. Through temporary and brief training of the *muballigh* (Islamic preacher), the direct training alums played a vital role in the expansion of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in the early days.

According to Ruswan Thoyib, the factor supporting the expansion of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* is the militancy of the *pesantren* alum cadres, where the branches of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* generally stand with a tremendous *jihad* spirit capital from the alums of Hidayatullah *Pesantren*.<sup>40</sup> For example, Sunoto Achmad, an alumnus of the Hidayatullah Surabaya branch, said that the students who were married to *pesantren* then got the task of opening a new branch. Usually, they are only given *Suara Hidayatullah* magazine to be sold to the community in the new place and introduced to Hidayatullah *Pesantren* and its programs. With great

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<sup>39</sup> Salbu, *Mencetak Kader; Perjalanan Hidup Ustadz Abdullah Said Pendiri Hidayatullah*, 129.

<sup>40</sup> Thoyib, "Artikulasi Ideologi Gerakan Salafiah dalam Pendidikan *Pesantren* Hidayatullah," 111.

diligence, they can finally open a new branch.<sup>41</sup>

The widening of the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* branch started in the area, city, and regency in the East Kalimantan Province region. It is noted that the branch of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* was first initiated in Berau District in 1977. Following later branches in Tarakan and Samarinda City in 1978, Bontang City in 1982, Pasir District in 1983, and Sangatta in 1993. In the following years, Hidayatullah *Pesantren* had branches in Bulungan, Nunukan, Malinau, Kutai Kartanegara (Tenggarong), West Kutai (Melak), Tanah Tidung and Penajam Paser Utara.<sup>42</sup> Expansion to the Provinces outside of East Kalimantan is also carried out simultaneously with the widening of branches in the province region. As in West Kalimantan Province, where the branch of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* was established in Ketapang District in 1990; Pontianak in 1992, which was followed by the establishment of branches of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Sampit, Palangkaraya, Pangkalan Bun, and Banjarmasin.<sup>43</sup>

Efforts to widen Hidayatullah *Pesantren's* branch are not only made in remote areas on the island of Borneo.<sup>44</sup> Even from the beginning, Abdullah Said greatly desired for Hidayatullah *Pesantren* to be established in two major cities, namely Jakarta and Surabaya. Manshur Salbu notes that since 1983, Abdullah Said has assigned his *santri* to Jakarta to explore establishing a branch. In 1985, Hidayatullah *Pesantren* was established in Cilodong, Depok City, West Java.<sup>45</sup> At present, Jakarta is the seat of Hidayatullah's Central Executive Board (DPP), and the Jakarta branch of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* manages Islamic education from Kindergarten

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>42</sup> Manshur Salbu, K.H. *Abdullah Said Pendiri Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah: Pokok-Pokok Pikiran, Kiprah Dan Perjuangannya* (Balikpapan: Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah, 2007), 170–188.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 190–201.

<sup>44</sup> Hilman Latief, "Islamic Charities and Dakwah Movements in a Muslim Minority Island: The Experience of Niasan Muslims," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 06, no. 02 (2012): 221–244, 10.15642/JIIS.2012.6.2.221-244.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 202–203.



(TK) to higher education (STIE Hidayatullah).

Similarly, in the city of Surabaya, since the arrival of three student activists Surabaya namely Abdurrahman<sup>46</sup> (UNAIR), Chusnul Chuluk (IKIP), and Bukhari Muslim (Untag-Tujuh Belas Agustus University) to *Pesantren* Hidayatullah Balikpapan on June 15, 1985.<sup>47</sup> The three students then invited their friends to form a committee to prepare the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* branch (a kind of *pesantren* for student college). Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Surabaya branch proliferated after other student activists like Hamim Thohari.<sup>48</sup> (IKIP), Sulaiman (ITS), El-Venus Yahya (Unair), and Rachmad Rachman (Unair) participated in developing the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Surabaya branch.<sup>49</sup> Unlike Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Balikpapan, which moves from the city's outskirts, the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Surabaya branch is standing in the center of the town. East of *Pesantren* stands an elite residential complex, and in the west, there is ITS (Surabaya Institute of Technology), a renowned College in Surabaya.<sup>50</sup> Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Surabaya already has famous Islamic educational institutions, from kindergarten (TK) to higher education (STAI Lukman Al-Hakim).

According to Ruswan Thoyib, alumnus of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Surabaya have a significant role in the expansion of Hidayatullah

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<sup>46</sup> Abdurrahman was steered the day elected as Chairman of the Central Executive Board (DPP) Hidayatullah period 2000-2005, when Hidayatullah *Pesantren* transformed into Islamic organization. Utomo, "Kolom Ta'aruf."

<sup>47</sup> Salbu, K.H. *Abdullah Said Pendi Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah: Pokok-Pokok Pikiran, Kiprah dan Perjuangannya*, 207.

<sup>48</sup> Hamim Thohari once represented DPP Hidayatullah in the MPR/DPR period 1999-2004 as the Group Envoy. This fact proves that the existence of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Indonesia is quite taken into account by the Government R.I. as well as other major Islamic organizations.

<sup>49</sup> Salbu, K.H. *Abdullah Said Pendi Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah: Pokok-Pokok Pikiran, Kiprah dan Perjuangannya*, Sulaiman, *Potensi Organisasi Hidayatullah di Jawa Tengah dan Jawa Timur, Studi Kasus di Kota Surabaya* (Semarang: Balai Penelitian Aliran Kerohanian/Keagamaan Departemen Agama, 2000), 23.

<sup>50</sup> Thoyib, "Artikulasi Ideologi Gerakan Salafiah dalam Pendidikan *Pesantren* Hidayatullah," 113.

*Pesantren* in all regions of Java Island (East Java, Central Java, and West Java), Madura, Bali, Mataram (NTB), and Kupang (NTT).<sup>51</sup> Manshur Salbu notes that from the cadres built by Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Surabaya, there are branches in 55 regencies and municipalities.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Surabaya branch became the coordinating center of the established branches. The DPW (Regional Leadership Council) established in each province will run the coordination function. As far as my observations, nevertheless, of the many branches of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* which stood on the island of Java, there is one branch which then broke away organizationally and chose to be independent, namely the branch of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Purwokerto city. This is the only branch of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* that has spread all over Indonesia and escaped.

The establishment of the branch of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* on the island of Sulawesi, where the founders of Hidayatullah were, differs from the pattern of expansion in Java. This is not the case in Java, which makes the cities of Jakarta and Surabaya the initial goal of widening their branches. In Sulawesi, the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* branch was first established in Central Sulawesi, namely in Buol Toli regency, in 1983.<sup>53</sup> In 1984, the majority of the community in Manado, North Sulawesi, was Christian.<sup>54</sup> From here onwards, branches continued to be established in the surrounding cities, such as Bitung in 1986 and Gorontalo in 1994. In Central Sulawesi, other than Buol District, the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* branch also stood in Palu in 1988 and Poso in 1996.<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, the pattern of Hidayatullah *Pesantren's* expansion into South Sulawesi, almost similar to that occurred in Surabaya, which originated from the interest of Muslim student activists in the city of

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Salbu, K.H. *Abdullah Said Pendiri Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah: Pokok-Pokok Pikiran, Kiprah dan Perjuangannya*, 209.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 251–252.

Makassar to the movement of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Balikpapan. Starting from the visit of the board of the HMI (Islamic Student Association) Makassar branch to Balikpapan, which was done on 14 April 1990, coinciding with 18 Ramadan 1410, led by Anshar Amiruddin and his wife, Rahmawati. The entourage included Abdul Aziz Kahar Muzakkar<sup>56</sup> (Chairman of HMI Makassar in 1988), Abdul Majid, Khairil Baits, and Sundusin. Returning from Balikpapan, Abdul Aziz Kahar and his fellow members and HMI administrators formed a foundation named Yayasan Al-Huda, which became the forerunner of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Makassar.<sup>57</sup> Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Makassar already has an Islamic educational institution from kindergarten to senior high school.

On the other hand, as in Surabaya, in Makassar, the branch of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* stands in the middle of the city, adjacent to the Bumi Tamalanrea Housing Complex. In addition, the existence of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Makassar is getting stronger after its branch leader Abdul Aziz Kahar, who is the son of Kahar Muzakkar—the main character of DI/TII in South Sulawesi—wins the sympathy of the people of South Sulawesi. To facilitate the expansion of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in other cities, such as the city of Kendari (Southeast Sulawesi) and Soroako in 1992, the Regency of Bone in 1996; the town of Palopo and Pare-pare in 1997, and the city of Enrekang in 1994.<sup>58</sup>

Abdullah Said's attention was to place his cadre to pioneer the branch of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in areas of Islamic minority, like in Manado, also conducted in Papua (Irian Jaya). Manshur Salbu notes that since 1988, Abdullah Said has commissioned three of his cadre to explore the possibility of establishing the branch of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in the Papua Region. The breakthrough of Islamic Preaching by Hidayatullah

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<sup>56</sup> Abdul Aziz Kahar Muzakkar has a strong political influence in South Sulawesi, proved he has always been elected to represent the Regional Representatives Council (DPD) for several periods, and currently runs for the Vice-Governor candidate

<sup>57</sup> Salbu, K.H. *Abdullah Said Pendiri Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah: Pokok-Pokok Pikiran, Kiprah dan Perjuangannya*, 227.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 230–241.

*Pesantren* in Papua received a positive response from Muslim traders and business people living in Papua, given the lack of intense dakwah efforts from other mass organizations. Support also flows from local Muslim government apparatus, such as the Vice Governor of Irian Jaya, Soedradjat Nataatmadja.<sup>59</sup> Jayapura City was the first city where the branch of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* was established in 1988, followed by other cities around it, such as Monokwari and Sorong in 1989; the city of Fak-Fak in 1990; Merauke in 1991; Timika in 1992; Biak and Nabire and Serui in 1993; and Kaimana in 1995. At the same time, the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* branch was established in cities outside Papua Province, such as Ternate and Ambon in 1993 and Tual and Masohi in 1995.<sup>60</sup> Hidayatullah already exists in all provinces in Indonesia, namely 38 provinces. The number of Regional Management Councils (DPD, district/city level) is 402, or about 78 percent of the total districts/cities in Indonesia.<sup>61</sup>

The expansion of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Balikpapan is done in Kalimantan, Java, Sulawesi, and Papua (Irian Jaya) and reaches the island of Sumatera. Since 1988, Abdullah Said has commissioned his cadre to explore opening a branch in Dumai City, Riau Islands. Opportunities to open branches became more open after Abdullah Said came directly to Dumai to hold a Preaching Course with his wife, Aida Chered, and Usman Palese in early March 1989 for a week.<sup>62</sup> So precisely in September 1989, the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* branch was officially established in Dumai. As expansion in the previous area, Hidayatullah *Pesantren* focuses on more than one city within one province. After the city of Dumai, in 1993, the branch of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* was established in the cities of Medan, Palembang, and Lampung; Pekanbaru, Lhokseumawe, and Jambi in

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 254–256.

<sup>60</sup> Salbu, K.H. *Abdullah Said Pendiri Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah: Pokok-Pokok Pikiran, Kiprah Dan Perjuangannya*, Athwa, “Kolom Ta’aruf,” 86.

<sup>61</sup> <https://hidayatullah.or.id/setelah-lantik-1-hidayatullah-lantik-lagi-3-dpw-baru-di-pulau-papua/> accessed on September 10, 2024.

<sup>62</sup> Salbu, K.H. *Abdullah Said Pendiri Pondok Pesantren Hidayatullah: Pokok-Pokok Pikiran, Kiprah Dan Perjuangannya*, 298.

1994; Bengkulu, Tanjung Pinang, and Tanjung Balai Karimun in 1995; Banda Aceh in 1996; and Batam in 1999. In addition, as in Manado and Papua, which are predominantly Christian, Hidayatullah *Pesantren* can also establish branches in the Mentawai Islands and Nias Island that, were Muslim minorities in 1998. However, the expansion in the cities of Sumatera Island was not without challenges, as seen in the case of the branch in Payakumbuh, which was pioneered in 1992 but could not be continued due to the location of *Pesantren* being a *wakaf* land taken over by the heirs.<sup>63</sup>

The process of opening branches of Hidayatullah *pesantren* was intensively conducted under the leadership of Abdullah Said. Ali Athwa noted that by the time Abdullah Said fell ill in 1996, the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* branch in Indonesia had totalled 130 branches, and 47 branches were being pioneered. The role of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* alums in establishing new branches is significant, with certain branches playing a crucial role. For instance, the branch of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Surabaya, whose alums opened many branches in Java and surrounding areas, and the branch of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Makassar, whose alumnus can be distributed to all Sulawesi region to open a new branch. Ali Athwa noted that in 1998, Hidayatullah *Pesantren* had branches in 25 cities throughout Sulawesi.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, Pambudi Utomo noted that as of 1999, Hidayatullah *Pesantren* had 200 branches throughout Indonesia.<sup>65</sup>

The process of disseminating branches of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Balikpapan to all parts of Indonesia is driven by the militancy and mental endurance of the students who are assigned, also due to the same pattern and mode between the establishment of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Balikpapan with its branches. The establishment of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* in Balikpapan was initiated by a strong desire for a location to apply Islamic values and sharia, and the area is named “*pesantren*.” Then, for the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 297–328.

<sup>64</sup> Athwa, “Kolom Ta’aruf,” 86.

<sup>65</sup> Utomo, “Kolom Ta’aruf,” 74.

benefit of raising funds from the community and government—hence the branches of the Hidayatullah *Pesantren* scattered throughout Indonesia, each has a different foundation name. So, with the funds collected, the process of building a mosque, secretarial office, boarding students, home for caregivers and schools from kindergarten to high school. While this infrastructure is built, the study of Islamic and religious activities and preaching continues to be turned on. However, it does not specify the area of the *Kitab Kuning*, particularly *pesantren*.<sup>66</sup>

The patterns and modes mentioned above are also made by almost all branches of Hidayatullah *Pesantrens* established throughout Indonesia. At this time, three universities were formed across three regions to supply the needs of Hidayatullah *Pesantren*'s branches to professionals. Namely Islamic Higher School Lukman Al-Hakim (STAIL) at Hidayatullah *Pesantren* Surabaya branch that supplies experts in the field of dakwah and Islamic education; Hidayatullah Higher School of Sharia (STIS) in Balikpapan that supplies experts in the field of sharia science; and Hidayatullah School of Economics (STIE) in Jakarta that supplies economic experts. The latest Hidayatullah has STIKMA (College of Computer Science) in Malang and STIT Hidayatullah (Hidayatullah Higher School of *Tarbiyah*) in Batam. Each year, hundreds of these five college alumni are deployed in all branches of Hidayatullah *Pesantren* throughout Indonesia.

## Conclusion

Historically, Hidayatullah emerged from the roots of the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) tradition and gradually transformed into a national Islamic organization. Over several decades, it has shown resilience and adaptability to the socio-cultural and socio-political dynamics of Indonesia. This resilience has also driven Hidayatullah's efforts to expand its influence across the country. The rapid development

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<sup>66</sup> Masdar F. Mas'udi, "Mengenal Pemikiran Kitab Kuning," in *Pergulatan Dunia Pesantren Membangun dari Bawah*, ed. Dawam Rahardjo (Jakarta: P3M, 1985), 56.

of Hidayatullah has been fueled by its programs focused on *dakwah* and educational activities. One of Hidayatullah's distinguishing features is its commitment to serving remote areas and regions with Muslim minority populations.

Hidayatullah's in further, adaptability and commitment to militancy in the Islamic education movement—from elementary through university levels—make it one of Indonesia's resilient organizations in the face of contemporary socio-cultural and political dynamics. Today, Hidayatullah is a prominent Islamic organization that plays a significant role in Indonesia's socio-political landscape. This adaptability also fuels Hidayatullah's ambitions to expand rapidly across the country. Through this extensive expansion, Hidayatullah has evolved from an institution focused on *pesantren* and social activities into one of Indonesia's leading Islamic organizations, alongside NU and Muhammadiyah. The organization's focus on Islamic outreach and educational activities has also been a crucial factor in its growth and prominence in Indonesia.



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