



Speech About Islam: Dhani “Dewa” Admired by American Generals

Washington DC. Ahmad Dhani, the leader of Dewa, is not merely a brilliant songwriter. The husband of Maia [of the group] “Ratu” is also a skilled orator, like his idol Sukarno. Dhani’s keynote address regarding Islam, delivered at a symposium in America, was followed with close attention by numerous generals in the service of Uncle Sam.

“I was the only speaker who received a standing ovation from the generals who attended,” Dhani proudly declared, when contacted by Detikhot’s Washington, DC correspondent, Endang Ismaini Saptorini, in the midst of activities to break the Ramadan fast in New York City on Friday (October 10, 2006).

“Do you know why? Because I spoke about something that you can’t find in books. Most of the other speakers were intellectuals who learn from books... but what I told them can’t be found, for the most part, in books... that’s what made me so different,” continued Dhani, again revealing how proud he was.

The creator of [the hit song] “I Want to Make Love Now” could not conceal his happiness. “Basically, I’m proud as an Indonesian citizen to have become the star of that symposium. I felt like Sukarno when he addressed the U.S. Congress,” Dhani added.

Responding to the invitation of Admiral Timothy J. Keating, USN, Commander-in-Chief of NORAD/USNORTHCOM (North American Aerospace Defense Command/U.S. Northern Command) – the man who just recently was the subject of gossip concerning an alleged secret marriage to Mulan of the group “Ratu,” addressed the conference regarding the vital need for the U.S. government to better understand Islam itself, and radical Islam. Dhani also encouraged symposium participants to become better acquainted with Sufism, a stream of Islam which prioritizes establishing harmony in human life and with God.

“All this time, American generals have been receiving inaccurate information about Islam; in fact, many were frustrated with the American government because they had never been given information about Sufism,” Dhani explained.

Ahmad Dhani attended and spoke at the event as a representative of LibForAll Foundation, a progressive Islamic group founded by Gus Dur. Dhani’s primary mission in attending the symposium was to prevent further misunderstandings between Indonesian Muslims who view America as hating Islam, and Americans who do not understand Islam as it is in reality.

“In fact, a good relationship can and will exist between our two countries if both sides understand each other, because in America, Islam is greatly respected as one of the world’s major religions. The U.S. simply does not agree with radical Islam, because its teachings closely resemble those of communism, which regards its ideology as being the sole expression of truth,” said Dhani.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security was also attracted to the various ways Dewa have promoted tolerance, such as the lyrics of [the hit song] *Laskar Cinta* (“Warriors of Love”). In those lyrics, Dewa had the courage to insert verses of the Qur’an that forbid Muslims from forcing their opinions on others, or acting in an authoritarian manner towards those who think or worship differently.

In 2007, Dhani explained, Dewa intends to translate and record *Laskar Cinta* in several languages, including Arabic, Indian, Swahili, Bengali and English.
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