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Former Indonesian President Calls Upon Muslims to Speak Out Against Extremism During U.S. Visit

Abdurrahman Wahid Implores Young Muslims to Reclaim Authentic Islam

WASHINGTON, May 7 – As much of the world clamors for a moderate Muslim voice to speak out against extremism and violence in the Middle East and globally, Indonesia's first democratically elected President, His Excellency Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid, last night outlined his views on promoting peace by exporting pluralistic and tolerant forms of Islam to the Middle East.

"Rather than view Israel and Jews through a politicized lens of religious hatred and violence, we must help Muslim populations – not only in Palestine, but throughout the Arab world – rise to embrace a profoundly spiritual and tolerant understanding of Islam, and a humanistic attitude towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," said President Wahid.

President Wahid's comments came during a rare visit to the United States to accept The Simon Wiesenthal Center's Medal of Valor for his leadership of the **LibForAll Foundation** and his efforts to combat Holocaust denial in the Muslim world.

During the remainder of his visit, President Wahid will also meet with various political leaders, serve as honoree at a dinner hosted by the American Jewish Committee in Washington, D.C., and participate in an event with the American Islamic Congress's Project Nur program, in which he will speak directly to young Muslims at the George Washington University campus.

In the Project Nur event titled, "Last King of Java: Reflections on the Need for Moderate Islam," President Wahid will join Zainab Al Suwajj, Executive Director of the American Islamic Congress, and LibForAll Foundation Co-Founder, C. Holland Taylor in discussing the need for moderate Muslims to combat extremism by promoting pluralistic and tolerant Islam.

"Project Nur aims to build positive relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim students and works to promote human rights and positive social change while celebrating the cultural and social identities of students, regardless of whether the individuals are religious or not," said Zainab Al Suwajj, Executive Director of the American Islamic Congress. "President Wahid

embodies these same values by promoting pluralistic and tolerant forms of Islam and by embracing the exchange of ideas between Muslims and non-Muslims."

"Muslims themselves must propagate an understanding of tolerant Islam and work to discredit extremist ideologies. Accomplishing this task requires the understanding and support of like-minded individuals, organizations and governments throughout the world," said President Wahid. "The American Islamic Congress, through its Project Nur program, does just that by engaging young Muslims in promoting responsible leadership and interfaith understanding without the cloud of extremism and hatred."

President Wahid has assumed the mantle of leadership of an international movement dedicated to stemming the tide of radical Islam and reclaiming authentic Islam from those who have corrupted its teachings and used them to promote a repressive political ideology, religious intolerance and terrorism.

The lynchpin of this movement is the LibForAll Foundation, an Indonesian-U.S.-and Netherlands- based organization that President Wahid co-founded to propagate models of a prosperous, moderate and tolerant Islam, and to support moderate and progressive Muslims in their efforts to promote a culture of liberty and tolerance.

President Wahid is one of the few Muslims in the world with the credentials, credibility and authority necessary to lead an international effort of this magnitude. As a former President of Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, and longtime head of the Nadhlatul Ulama, the world's largest Muslim organization, President Wahid commands attention as both a political and religious authority," said LibForAll Foundation Co-Founder C. Holland Taylor.

In 2007, in a bold and courageous move, President Wahid partnered with the LibForAll Foundation and The Simon Wiesenthal Center to host a major international Holocaust conference in Bali, Indonesia, during which he publicly condemned the Holocaust denial conference in Tehran and reaffirmed the historical truth and tragedy of the Holocaust. It was for his work on this conference and his leadership of the LibForAll Foundation that the Simon Wiesenthal Center honored President Wahid with its 2008 Medal of Valor.

President Wahid will travel from the United States to join world leaders in attendance at the "Facing Tomorrow" conference, which will be held in Jerusalem from May 13-15 and also marks Israel's 60th anniversary.