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## PKS denounces report on radicalism

Ridwan Max Sijabat , THE JAKARTA POST , JAKARTA | Sun, 04/05/2009 1:03 PM | [Headlines](#)

The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) denounced a report alleging its members and the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) group were undermining moderate Islam in the country, retorting it had never tolerated radicalism and was trying to win the hearts of the people to build a democracy in line with the Constitution.

The report - titled "The Illusion of an Islamic State: The Expansion of Transnational Islamist Movements to Indonesia" - was jointly published by the Wahid Institute, the Maarif Institute and the Bhinneka Tunggal Ika movement. Abdurrahman Wahid is a leading figure of Nahdlatul Ulama, while Syafii Maarif is a prominent personality of Muhammadiyah, the biggest Islamic organizations in Indonesia.

The report said members of the PKS and the HTI were "infiltrating" moderate Muslim groups and institutions such as schools, to press for their agenda.

On Saturday, Deputy Secretary-general of PKS Fahri Hamzah questioned the credibility of the researchers saying they wrongly presumed Islam was a local - rather than universal - religion with universal values, including moderation.

"Christianity and Islam were born in the jahiliyah era \*time of cruelty, immorality\* in the Middle East, and their prophets preached how to fight cruelty with moderation and tolerance. Now, the two religions' followers no longer take up arms, but instead adhere to moderation and other international values to make the world a peaceful and safe place to live in," he told The Jakarta Post.

He denied his party harbored "extremists", as Wahid mentioned, citing jealousy of the PKS for having recruited many young and talented candidates, as well as politicians and scholars.

Fahri, also a legislator seeking re-election in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, stressed the PKS had never tolerated radicalism or the use of violence and never brainwashed candidates into becoming extremists.

He said the report accused the PKS of planning a rebellion against the state, democracy and freedom in the country.

"If the party is planning to create an Islamist state, then why is it allowed to contend the elections? If candidates are involved in extremist activities, they have to be brought to justice and punished according to the law," he said.

In contrast with the Bush administration, Fahri said, President Barack Obama signaled he wanted to reach out to Indonesia - the largest Muslim-majority nation - and facilitate a dialog with the Islamic world, a new move PKS fully supported, forging closer ties between the West and the Islamic world.

"But what will happen if we, at home, are suspicious of one another?" he said, adding it would be better for all sides to build a dialog to achieve the nation's common goals.