

NU could split after Gus Mus named ‘rais aam’

Ahmad Junaidi, The Jakarta Post, Jombang, East Java | Headlines | Thu, August 06 2015, 4:14 PM



Plea for unity: Hasyim Muzadi (right), a candidate for *rais aam* (supreme leader) of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), leaves a meeting with NU leaders at its congress venue in Jombang, East Java, on Wednesday. Hasyim called on NU members not to organize a rebel congress or establish a rival NU as both actions would discredit the organization. (Antara/Syaiful Arif)

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the country's largest Islamic organization, will likely be divided into two factions after noted cleric Mustofa "Gus Mus" Bisri was chosen as *rais aam* (supreme leader) during NU's 33rd *muktamar* (national congress) in Jombang, East Java, on Wednesday evening.

"Gus Mus was appointed as *rais aam* and Ma'ruf Amin was chosen as deputy *rais aam*," said the congress' local committee chairman, Syaifullah "Gus Ipul" Yusuf, as he announced the decision of a council of nine selected senior clerics, called Ahlul Halli Wal Aqdi (AHWA), who were earlier nominated by clerics from NU's 508 chapters nationwide and seven chapters overseas.

Earlier on Wednesday, disappointed by a plenary meeting that approved the AHWA, hundreds of supporters of former NU chairman Hasyim Muzadi left the meeting and returned to their camp at Tebuieng pesantren (Islamic boarding school) in Jombang.

Hasyim approved his supporters to establish a forum as the current NU central board had experienced a demission. Salahuddin "Gus Solah" Wahid, the grandson of NU cofounder Hasyim

Asy'ari, was also present. The camp argued they were blocked from using their rights to convey their protests and they accused a Cabinet minister of interfering in NU's internal affairs. They claimed to be the representatives of 401 branches and 29 provincial representatives.

"Every time we want to convey our position, especially on the AHWA, we are always interrupted by the presiding meeting chairman," said Amri Siregar from NU's South Sumatra chapter.

As this article went to print, voting to elect the next NU chairman was still ongoing, with Said Aqil Siradj considered likely to be reelected.

The appointment of Gus Mus, who is also known as a prominent poet, had been predicted after senior clerics in NU's chapters voted to use a consensus mechanism in the AHWA, defeating less than half of the clerics who rejected the council.

Gus Mus tearfully asked the NU participants to show their qualities as religious leaders.

Those clerics who rejected the council said that the system, which was proposed by the NU central board, was an effort to stop the candidacy of Hasyim Muzadi, who is also a member of the Presidential Advisory Board.

The clerics and many other participants expressed their objection to the system since President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo officially opened the congress on Saturday night. They urged that the positions of *rais aam* and chairman be voted for directly by all participants, as occurred in earlier congresses.

Fahrurrozi of the NU central board said that a consensus system through the AHWA aimed to avoid fights among clerics, as well as vote buying.

"The idea of consensus through the AHWA council emerged after the last *muktamar* in Makassar," Fahrurrozi said on Wednesday.

In Makassar five years ago, Hasyim Muzadi, who was once nominated as vice presidential candidate to accompany presidential candidate Megawati Soekarnoputri from the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) in the presidential election in 2004, was defeated by Sahal Mahfudz.

In that congress, Said Aqil Siradj beat the leader of the Tebuireng pesantren, Gus Sholah, who is also the youngest brother of the country's fourth president Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid, and other candidates, including former Golkar Party politician Slamet Effendy Yusuf.

Now, in Jombang — the birthplace of NU when it was established by several clerics, including Hasyim Asy'ari, on Jan. 31, 1926 — Gus Sholah, who once ran as a vice presidential candidate with presidential candidate Wiranto in the 2004 presidential election, nominated himself again for the role of NU chairman.

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/08/06/nu-could-split-after-gus-mus-named-rais-aam.html>