



Indonesian ‘cyber warriors’ seek to counter ISIS message



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A group of Indonesian “cyber warriors” sit glued to screens, as they send out messages promoting a moderate form of Islam in the world’s most populous Muslim-majority country.

Armed with laptops and smartphones, some 500 members of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) — one of the world’s biggest Muslim organizations — are seeking to counter ISIS messages.

“We’ll never let Islam be hijacked by fools who embrace hate in their heart,” tweeted Syafi’ Ali, a prominent member of the NU’s online army, a typical message to his tens of thousands of followers.

They are trying to hit back at ISIS’ sophisticated Internet operations, which have been credited with attracting huge numbers from around the world to their cause.

Internet propaganda is believed to have played a key role in drawing some 500 Indonesians to the Middle East to join ISIS, particularly among those living in cities where it is easier to get online.

The dangers of the growing ISIS influence in Indonesia were starkly illustrated in January when militants linked to the extremists launched a gun and suicide bombing attack in Jakarta, leaving four assailants and four civilians dead.

It was the first major attack in Indonesia for seven years, following a string of militant bombings in the early 2000s that killed hundreds.

As well as firing off tweets, the NU members have sought to dominate cyberspace by establishing websites promoting the group's moderate views, an Android app and web-based TV channels, whose broadcasts include sermons by moderate preachers.

The initiative has been building momentum for a while but started to pick up pace a few months ago. A handful of cyber warriors operate from a small office in Jakarta, while the rest work remotely, and the group mostly communicate with one another over the web.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/media/digital/2016/05/08/Indonesian-cyber-warriors-seek-to-counter-ISIS-message.html>