Indonesia’s largest Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama, has issued a call to end the usage of “infidel” or “kafir” to refer to non-Muslims in state or citizenship matters, a move that may be aimed at calming religious tensions ahead of the presidential election.

Nahdlatul Ulama, with around 140 million members, said at its recent National Conference that non-Muslims shouldn’t be referred to as “kafir” as they have equal...
standing in state affairs. The conference concluded non-Muslims should be referred to as “muwathin,” or citizens with the same rights and obligations as Muslim Indonesians, according to Ahmad Muntaha, an Islamic scholar and secretary of Nahdlatul Ulama’s East Java Ulema Assembly.

Muntaha said in a statement published on the group’s website on Friday that a Muslim shouldn’t address non-Muslims as “Hi, kafir” in any social context. The conference also emphasized that as a state, Indonesia wasn’t established by Muslims only, the statement said.

Nahdlatul Ulama’s recommendation comes as citizens of the world’s largest Muslim-majority country prepare for a presidential poll on April 17. Religious issues have fueled divisions between supporters of incumbent President Joko Widodo and rival Prabowo Subianto.

Widodo, known as Jokowi, has faced protests from some Islamic groups that allege he’s treated some Islamic clerics unfairly. The president’s running partner for the poll, Ma’ruf Amin, is an Islamic scholar and head of a nationwide council of Muslim religious leaders, as well as chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama’s advisory council.

Jokowi has dismissed the claims against him as baseless.