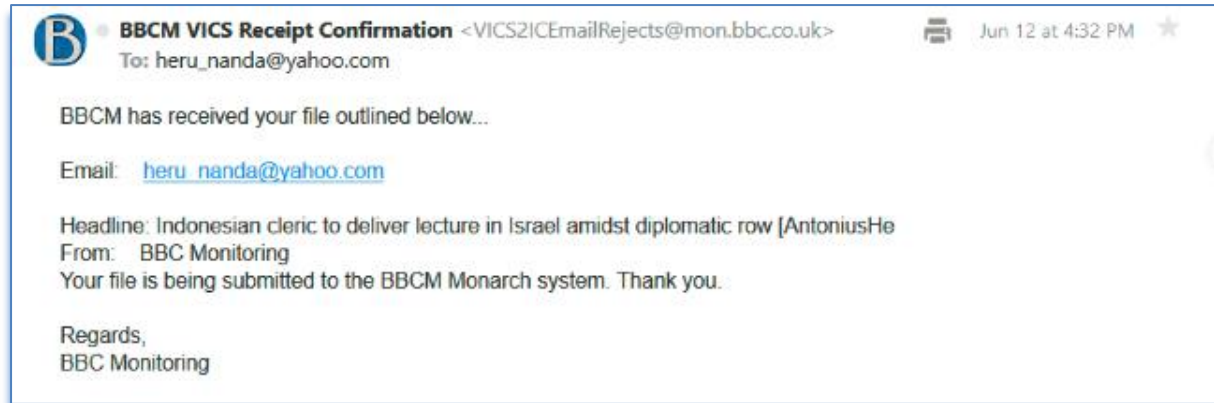


Indonesian Cleric To Deliver Lecture in Israel amidst Diplomatic Row



[Antonius Herujiyanto AH08_090618]

The Secretary-General of *Katib Aam* or the Supreme Council of NU [the largest Islamic community organization in Indonesia], cleric Yahya Cholil Staquf, has reportedly been invited by ICFR [the Israel Council on Foreign Relations- an independent forum dealing with foreign political issues especially on Israel and the Jews] to deliver a general lecture on “Shifting Geopolitical Calculus: From Conflict to Cooperation” in Jerusalem.

Cleric Yahya Cholil Staquf, who is also known as Gus Yahya, also serves as an adviser to President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo,

The lecture would be held at the David Amar World North African Jewish Heritage Centre in Jerusalem on June 13.

[When Jakarta strongly made the move in response to the ongoing violence in Gaza, Tel Aviv responded by announcing to bar Indonesians from entering the country. Instead of taking place on June 9, however, the ban would not take place until June 26.]

In the meantime, the Chairman of NU Robikin Enhas, has said that if cleric happens to accept the invitation, he will not consider it as representing NU and let alone the government, but himself as an individual.

Insisting that it is an individual invitation, the NU Chairman also denied about the fake information saying that the invitation has got something to do with the co-operation taking place between NU and Israel.

He also stated Saturday (on 9 June) that if the cleric would really go to deliver his general lecture in Israel, it would be dealing with his individual decision. He would not represent NU. Besides, there had never been any co-operation between NU and Israel.

Believing that cleric Yahya would also make use of his time to express his support to Palestine, he could imagine that the cleric would remind Israel of respecting an independent Palestine.

The Israeli invitation was initially spread up through the Twitter account of an Israeli journalist, Simon Aran. He carried the information on his social media, saying that although Israel and Indonesia have got no diplomatic relation, but an important Indonesian cleric would deliver a general lecture at the David Amar World North African Jewish Heritage Centre, in Mendelin Institute Jerusalem on June 13.

Mentioning the identity of cleric Yahya Cholil Staqf, the journalist also writes in his Twitter that not only is the cleric the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of NU, but he also serves as an adviser to President Jokowi.

Source: *TI/SI*, kiblat/2018/06/09/pbnu-kehadiran-gus-yahya-ke-israel-atas-nama-pribadi/, "PBNU: Kehadiran Gus Yahya ke Israel Atas Nama Pribadi (Indonesian NU: Gus Yahya flies to Israel as individual)", in Indonesian, 9 June 18.

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