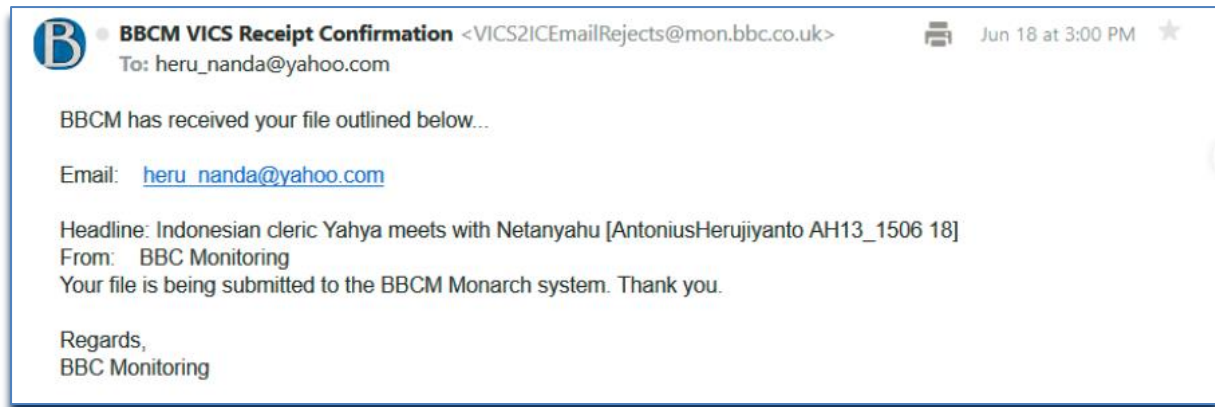


Indonesian Cleric Yahya Meets with Netanyahu



[Antonius Herujiyanto AH13_1506 18]

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has posted pictures of his meeting with an Indonesian cleric Yahya Cholil Staquf [also known as Gus Yahya] on his social media account.

The Prime Minister said that his meeting with the cleric on Thursday (14 June) was based on several reasons.

He might, however, have only known the cleric as an important Islamic figure with at least four positions, namely, a noted ulema with his own pesantren [Islamic boarding school]; the Secretary-General of *Katib Aam* or the Supreme Council of NU [the largest Islamic community organization in Indonesia]; one of President Jokowi's advisors; and the former spokesperson of President Abdurahman Wahid [Gus Dur].

The Israeli PM might not have realized that the cleric's visit to his country has caused debates in Indonesia.

Most debates tend to oppose his decision on accepting Israeli invitation to attend the conference of AJC Global Forum and the commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of Israeli independence. He was also demanded to deliver a general lecture at the David Amar World North African Jewish Heritage Centre, in Mendelin Institute Jerusalem on June 13. He was expected to talk on "Shifting Geopolitical Calculus: From Conflict to Cooperation."

The Foreign Affairs Department of the Indonesian Ulema Council or MUI, cleric Muhyiddin Junaidi, for example, has suggested that the cleric reject the Israeli invitation. Likewise other Indonesian Islamic important figures such as a noted Indonesian political observer, Abdul Muta'ali, two vocalists vice-Speakers of DPR, Fahri Hanzah and Fadli Zon, the chairman of Parmusi [one of the biggest Islamic community organization in the country], and even Hamas or the so-called Islamic Resistance Movement in Palestine and Fatah, have also voiced their strong objection.

According to them, not only does Indonesia have no diplomatic relation with Israel, but it is also due to religious ethics. It would also be clearly ignoring and violating the Jakarta agreement of IOC Extra Ordinary Summit on saving Al-Quds Syarif or *Baitul Maqdis*.

Coming to Israel would be inappropriate at all especially that it would be covered up with cultural and academic masks amidst violence in Gaza, leaving dozens of Palestinians dead at the hands of Israeli armed forces.

To them, accepting Israeli invitation would also mean violating the Indonesian Constitution, tainting Indonesian image, and ruining the Indonesian diplomatic relations with both Palestine and Arabic Nations. It would only hurt Indonesian Muslims' feelings and the peace loving world communities. Besides, such an invitation is an old tricky strategy of Israel in order to cover up their bad image in the International eyes.

In response to the many objections from different Islamic organisations [except NU], the cleric decided to cancel his delivering his lecture. He clarified, nevertheless, that he could not reject for the second time when Israel Council on Foreign Relations insisted and that he had been scheduled to

participate in the conference of AJC Global Forum Global AJC; attend the commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of Israeli independence; and meet Israeli Prime Minister.

In the meantime, before leaving for Israel, Gus Yahya wrote a letter to Foreign Affairs Minister Retno Marsudi, apologizing for having troubled her.

Clarifying his decision, however, the cleric says to her that he has received the invitation for long and that it has got something to do with the credibility of all his long years of study.

Explaining that he needs to globally spread up his findings and that such an opportunity has finally come, then he would obviously take such a rare occasion. He does not mind, indeed, cancelling his lecture, but he cannot reject the second opportunity when they have arranged that that he had been scheduled to participate in the conference of AJC Global Forum Global AJC to meet with International important figures including those academicians of Hebrew University; attend the commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of Israeli independence; and meet Israeli Prime Minister.

The cleric further writes that he has got his special idea on the Jews and that he needs to honestly talk about it without having any euphemistic and diplomatic expression. This is the one opportunity for him to be able to talk about his findings with no anti-Semitic stigma.

He said that all of them would be to the benefit to all parties.

In the meantime, in his Twitter (on 15 June), Netanyahu claimed that he appreciated the meeting with Gus Yahya, adding that he was very happy that there were more and more Arabic states and those of Muslims which have tried to approach and get closer to Israel. Not only was their coming to meet Israeli government based on security reason, but they did so because of having the same mission of struggles such as fighting against Iranian regime and that of technology.

Without mentioning Israeli repressive movements towards Palestinian people, Netanyahu hoped that both Israel and Indonesia had the same movements.

He did not clarify, however, about the meaning of his word “movement”.

Source:

SI/Kumparan, eramuslim/berita/palestina/staquf-beramah-tamah-dengan-netanyahu.htm, “Staquf Beramah Tamah Dengan Netanyahu (Indonesian cleric Staquf meets with Netanyahu)”, in Indonesian, 15 June 18.

kiblat/2018/06/15/yahya-staquf-dan-benjamin-netanyahu-berjabat-tangan/.

“Yahya Staquf dan Benjamin Netanyahu Berjabat Tangan (When cleric Yahya shakes hand with Netanyahu),” in Indonesian, 15 June 18.

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