

Staggering Political Career of Jokowi's Running Mate Cleric Ma'ruf Amin



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Wondering about Jokowi's decision to choose cleric Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate in the coming Presidential race, many people start to be curious, questioning who the cleric is.

Not only is the 75-year-old cleric [he was born on 11 March 1943 in Tangerang, Banten province, Java] the general chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council [MUI], but he is also the spiritual adviser or Rais Aam to NU [the largest Islamic community organization in the country].

Jokowi seems to expect the cleric to protect him against the criticism that he lacks sufficient Islamic credentials.

Having chosen cleric Ma'ruf as his running mate, Jokowi must have thought that he would attract and provide Indonesian voters with his nationalism and cleric Ma'ruf Amin's Islamism.

[It is beside the many "radical" actions conducted by the cleric such as, among others, playing his influential adversary, backing the 2016 massive street protests by conservative Muslims and fuelling a campaign that led to Jokowi's ally and successor as Jakarta's governor, Ahok, to be jailed for blaspheming Islam; having pushed behind the scenes for restrictions on homosexuals and minority religious sects while seeking a greater role for Islam in politics.]

The cleric was graduated from Tebuireng pesantren [Islamic boarding school] in Jombang, East Java. He earned his bachelor's degree in Islamic philosophy from Ibnu Khaldun University, Bogor, West Java.

He was elected as a member of the House of Representatives [DPR], representing the (conservative Islamic) United Development Party or PPP and served as leader of the PPP caucus from 1977 to 1982.

In 1989, he was appointed as a katib 'aam [a member of NU's supreme governing council]. He also became one of the advisors of President Abdurrahman Wahid (1999-2001).

As a legislator or a member of the House of Representatives (DPR) representing the (moderate Islamic) National Awakening Party or PKB (1999-2004), he was appointed chair of the Fourth Commission (agriculture, food, and maritime affairs) as well as member of the Second Commission (government affairs and regional autonomy) and Budgetary Board. He also chaired the Ulema Council's committee in charge of issuing fatwa [religious ruling].

Instead of seeking re-election to DPR in 2004, he accepted the appointment to be the Chairman of the National Sharia Committee of MUI (the Indonesian Ulema Council) from 2004 to 2010. He also served (2007-2014) as an advisor to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

In 2015 Ma'ruf was elected as the chairman of NU's Aam Syuriah [NU's supreme governing council]. Several weeks after that he was elected as the General Chairman of MUI.

Cleric Ma'ruf Amin was the great grandson of the Indonesian noted and respected moderate ulema Syaikh Nawawi Al-Bantani.

During a recent press conference (on 9 August), cleric Ma'ruf Amin said that it was very important to adhere to the Indonesian 1945 constitution and a state ideology [Pancasila] advocating tolerance and pluralism.

He also said that it was a must to keep Indonesia peaceful and safe.

Source: Ameera, *voa-islam* /read/politik-indonesia/2018/08/09/59544/inilah-profil-kiai-maruf-amin-cawapres-jokowi/#sthash.AssXo35E.dpbs, "*Inilah Profil Kiai Ma'ruf Amin Cawapres Jokowi (The profile of Jokowi's running mate cleric Ma'ruf Amin)*", in Indonesian, 9 August 18.

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