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The Role of Islamic Student Groups in the *Reformasi* Struggle: KAMMI (Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia)

Abstraksi: *Tulisan ini merupakan satu kajian awal yang berusaha mengungkap peran mahasiswa Muslim dalam proses reformasi di Indonesia belakangan ini. KAMMI (Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia) menjadi fokus kajian ini, dan dianggap telah memainkan peran penting dalam satu perjuangan yang berbuah mundurnya Soeharto dari kursi kepresidenan setelah berkuasa selama lebih dari tiga puluh tahun. Peran penting KAMMI dalam proses reformasi bisa diamati tidak saja pada aksi-aksi demonstrasi yang dilakukannya, tapi yang terpenting adalah isu-isu serta langkah-langkah politik yang menjadi orientasi utama gerakan mereka.*

Didirikan para aktifis mahasiswa Muslim pada 29 Maret 1998 di Malang, Jawa Tengah, KAMMI merumuskan peran sosialnya berkaitan dengan tiga entitas sosiologis yang sekaligus sebagai basis perjuangannya: kebangsaan Indonesia, umat atau komunitas Muslim, dan gerakan kemahasiswaan secara umum. Tiga rumusan peran tersebut, yang juga menjadi fokus analisa artikel ini, selanjutnya menempatkan KAMMI pada posisi yang spesifik dalam arus besar gerakan reformasi yang melibatkan hampir seluruh masyarakat Indonesia. Demikianlah berkaitan dengan peran sosial pertama, KAMMI secara tegas menekankan pentingnya persatuan bangsa Indonesia, dengan mengetengahkan kembali semangat Sumpah Pemuda. Krisis yang tengah dihadapi bangsa Indonesia, bagi KAMMI, membutuhkan pemecahan yang berbasis pada nilai-nilai universal yang terkandung dalam agama-agama di Indonesia.

Sementara itu untuk peran sosial kedua, umat, KAMMI menyatakan solidaritasnya terhadap berbagai persoalan di dunia Muslim, meski tetap mengarahkan perhatian dan gerakannya pada konteks Muslim Indonesia. Dalam hal ini, KAMMI menganggap bahwa gerakan reformasi adalah satu kesempatan bagi Muslim Indonesia untuk memajukan posisi mereka di tengah masyarakat, serta mensosialisasikan satu pemahaman baru tentang umat sebagai kekuatan moral guna menghancurkan tirani Orde Baru. Bagi KAMMI, keadilan tidak akan tercipta di Indonesia selama umat dimarginalkan. Untuk itu, KAMMI selanjutnya mengagendakan terbentuknya satu koalisi antara berbagai kelompok mahasiswa Muslim guna memperkuat posisi wakil-wakil Islam dalam gelombang reformasi ini.

Selanjutnya, untuk peran sosial ketiga, KAMMI menganggap kegiatan-kegiatan sosial sebagai satu kewajiban nasional mahasiswa Indonesia dalam rangka menentang ketidakadilan sosial-politik dan ekonomi. Dalam hal ini, KAMMI menekankan pentingnya membina persatuan di kalangan mahasiswa Muslim untuk membangun Indonesia di bawah semangat nilai-nilai Islam. Menurut KAMMI, gerakan reformasi oleh mahasiswa—seperti halnya konsep umat—harus menjadi satu kekuatan moral yang mampu mewarnai dan bahkan menentukan masa depan Indonesia. Sehingga, arah gerakan reformasi ini tetap bisa dipertahankan sesuai dengan semangat demokrasi dan keadilan, serta terbebas dari kontaminasi kepentingan-kepentingan politik oleh kelompok tertentu yang tidak sejalan dengan semangat reformasi.

Berdasarkan ketiga agenda di atas—lebih khususnya poin terakhir—KAMMI menjadikan “gerakan moral” sebagai orientasi utama gerakan yang dilakukan, dan sekaligus mengambil posisi independen dari berbagai kelompok kepentingan tertentu. Di sini, KAMMI mengambil haluan berbeda dari dua kecenderungan utama gerakan reformasi mahasiswa, yang saling bertentangan satu sama lain. Kedua kecenderungan tersebut adalah “kelompok Islam” yang mengedepankan simbol politik Islam, dan “kelompok kiri radikal” yang menuntut perubahan sistem politik Indonesia secara cepat, sehingga cenderung menggunakan cara-cara radikal dan anarkis.

Kondisi ini selanjutnya menjadikan KAMMI mengambil langkah-langkah politik yang bisa dikatakan moderat. Dalam artikel ini, dijelaskan bahwa KAMMI telah memberi kontribusi penting bagi pelaksanaan aksi reformasi damai, penekanan pada kekuatan aspek moral dan kekuasaan rakyat. Bersamaan dengan itu, nilai-nilai Islam universal sekaligus menjadi substansi utama yang berfungsi sebagai basis etik orientasi gerakan yang dilakukannya. Dengan cara demikianlah, KAMMI—dan juga Islam Indonesia yang diwakilinya—telah memberi sumbangan sangat berarti dalam gerakan reformasi di Indonesia.

The Role of Islamic Student Groups in the *Reformasi* Struggle: KAMMI (Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia)

خلاصة: يعد هذا البحث دراسة تمهيدية تكشف النقاب عن دور الطلاب المسلمين في حركة الإصلاح بإندونيسيا القائمة في الآونة الأخيرة، ومن الثابت أن رابطة الحركات الطلابية الإسلامية الإندونيسية (KAMMI) التي هي موضوع البحث كان لها دور هام في تلك الأحداث التي نجم عنها سقوط الرئيس سوهارتو (Soeharto) بعد حكم دام أكثر من ثلاثين عاما، ولم يكن الدور الهام الذي تلعبه الرابطة في حركة الإصلاح قاصرة على المظاهرات العديدة التي يقومون بها وإنما يمكن ملاحظته — وهو الأهم — كذلك في جانب الأفكار مع خطواتها السياسية التي كانت حركة الطلاب منصبة عليها.

وأنشئت رابطة الحركات الطلابية الإسلامية الإندونيسية بمدينة مالانج (Malang) في ٢٩ مارس ١٩٩٨ م على أيدي زعماء الطلاب المسلمين وقد رسمت دورها الاجتماعي مرتبطا بثلاثة حقائق اجتماعية صارت في نفس الوقت أساس الحركة وهي القومية الإندونيسية والعمل من أجل الأمة أو المجتمع الإسلامي والحركات الطلابية عموما، وهذه الأدوار التي هي موضوع البحث تضع الرابطة بدورها في مكانة متميزة داخل حركة الإصلاح التي تورط فيها جميع الشعب الإندونيسي تقريبا، وهكذا ففيما يتعلق بالدور الأول حددت الرابطة موقفها بكل صراحة من أهمية القومية الإندونيسية مع التأكيد مرة أخرى على ميثاق الشبان (Sumpah Pemuda)، وكان في رأى الرابطة أن الأزمة التي تتعرض لها إندونيسيا تحتاج إلى معالجة قائمة على القيم العالمية التي أتت بها الأديان بإندونيسيا. وأما الدور الثاني فقد أكدت الرابطة تضامنها مع الحركات الإسلامية في العالم من أجل إيجاد حلول لمختلف المشاكل التي يعاني منها العالم الإسلامي، وإن كانت تركز اهتمامها وحركتها على المسلمين بإندونيسيا، وفي هذا الصدد ترى الرابطة أن الحركة الإصلاحية القائمة تمثل فرصة سانحة أمام المسلمين أن يرتقوا بمكانتهم في

المجتمع الإندونيسي وأن يستعرضوا معنى جديداً لمفهوم الأمة كقوة إيديولوجية ضد استبداد نظام الحكم الجديد، وفي رأيها كذلك أن العدالة الاجتماعية لا يمكن أن تتحقق في إندونيسيا ما دامت الأمة الإسلامية بمعزل عن المشاركة السياسية، ولذلك حددت الرابطة في جدول أعمالها ضرورة إنشاء تحالف بين مختلف المجموعات الطلابية الإسلامية لدعم الممثلين للإسلام في حركة الإصلاح القائمة.

وأما الدور الاجتماعي الثالث فهو أن الرابطة تنظر إلى الأنشطة الاجتماعية على أنها واجبة قومية تقع على عاتق الطلاب المسلمين المجاهدين ضد الظلم السياسي والاجتماعي والاقتصادي بإندونيسيا، وفي هذا الصدد تشيد الرابطة بأهمية توحيد صفوف الطلاب لبناء إندونيسيا على القيم الإسلامية، وكان في رأى الرابطة كذلك أن الحركة الإصلاحية مثلها مثل مفهوم الأمة يجب أن تكون قوة إيديولوجية قادرة على توجيه مسار البلاد بل وتحديد مستقبلها، وبذلك تبقى الحركة الإصلاحية محتفظة بالقيم الديمقراطية والعدالة متحررة من المصالح السياسية التي تجاهد من أجلها جماعات معينة لا تتمشى مع روح الإصلاح.

وبناء على هذه النقاط الثلاث وبالأخص النقطة الأخيرة جعلت الرابطة من حركتها اتجاهها أخلاقياً وتتخذ في نفس الوقت موقفاً مستقلاً من مصالح سياسية معينة، وهنا تختار الرابطة وجهة مخالفة لاتجاهين رئيسيين في حركة الطلاب يتعارض أحدهما مع الآخر وهما المجموعة الإسلامية التي تتسم بالإسلام السياسي والمجموعة اليسارية الراديكالية التي تطالب بتغيير نظام الحكم على المنهج الثوري، مما أفضى بها إلى استخدام وسائل متطرفة والوقوع في الفوضى.

وهذه الأوضاع جعلت الرابطة بدورها تتخذ موقفاً يمكن أن يقال إنه معتدل، وقد توصلت المقالة إلى أن الرابطة قد أسهمت بدور هام في توجيه حركة الإصلاح إلى اتجاه السلام والتركيز على الجانب الأخلاقي والسلطة للشعب، بينما جعلت القيم الإسلامية العالمية مبادئ أساسية لوجهتها الأخلاقية التي تقوم بها، وبهذا قدمت الرابطة والمسلمون ورائهم والذين تمثلهم بإسهام كان له أهميته في حركة الإصلاح بإندونيسيا.

Footage of scores of boisterous students dressed in conservative Muslim attire reciting praises of the prophet Muhammad while long lines of stoic soldiers in riot gear look on; a panorama of thousands kneeling together in prayer amidst banners bearing slogans demanding *reformasi*;¹ a close-up of a young woman wearing traditional Muslim head covering, shouting into a microphone with her fist raised in defiance—these are the images of KAMMI, the Indonesian Muslim Student Action Union (Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia), with which Indonesians have become increasingly familiar since student activism began to erupt in unprecedented intensity in early 1998. Through grand-scale demonstrations, the dramatic use of Islamic symbols, and a shrewd handling of the media, KAMMI has emerged as one of the most conspicuous student organizations pressuring the Indonesian government for change. Yet, as it has attempted to bring together myriad Muslim student groups, it has had to confront the great diversity of opinion that characterizes both the student movement and Indonesia's Muslim community. As KAMMI has emerged as an important vehicle representing the social and political aspirations of numerous Islamic students, it has frequently found itself straddling the precarious gap between forces demanding "total reform," and those seeking to avoid the "anarchy" deemed likely if certain aspects of the status quo are not maintained.

As a relatively new Islamic student organization, KAMMI has quite consciously sought to define its societal role in relation to three social entities in which it participates: the Indonesian nation; the *umat*—which is the "community of believers" in Islam; and the student movement in general. In regards to the nation, like most student groups, KAMMI is strongly patriotic and voices unwavering support for national unity, echoing the pledges made by the nationalist students of the colonial era who vowed to unify the archipelago by creating "one state, one nation, and one national language²." The organization, however, is highly critical of the current condition of the nation and points to a society-wide moral crisis as the fundamental problem affecting Indonesia. It asserts that the nation's character must be bound by a system of morals, and state policymaking informed by the "universal values" expressed by the various religions embraced in Indonesia. It describes itself as a "pressure group" working to affect government decision-making and redefine national priorities in accordance with religious values and morals.

Regarding the *umat*, KAMMI expresses solidarity with Muslims

worldwide, yet until very recently it has focused its energies upon the problems of Muslims in Indonesia—the largest population of Muslims in the world. It considers the reform movement to be an opportunity for Indonesian Muslims to advance to their “rightful place” in society, and it is striving to “express the conscience of the *umat* as a moral force in breaking down the tyranny” that has confronted Muslims since early in the New Order era (KAMMI, 1 June 1998). It sees the *umat* as having been a victim of the Soeharto regime since, among many reasons, Muslims comprise the vast majority of Indonesia’s population, yet hold relatively little economic power. As it asserts that “there is no justice in Indonesia while the *umat* is marginalized,” the organization strives to build coalitions between Muslim student groups in order to strengthen the representation of Islamic concerns within the larger reform movement. For this reason I describe the organization as *Islamist*, a term which implies an orientation toward increasing the role of Islam in society and linking Islam and politics (See Haliday, 1995). KAMMI argues that increased involvement in leadership by citizens of Islamist orientation is an essential component of any true national reform effort in order to counteract the blatant disregard of Muslim interests during the New Order era. It also emphasizes that its commitment to the *umat* goes far beyond its political struggle in that the group is directly involved with community service projects and various poverty relief efforts.

Regarding the student movement, KAMMI considers social activism to be a national duty for Indonesian students, and it feels compelled to organize students in opposition to what it views as injustice (*zâlim*). Its primary goal is to assemble all Indonesian Muslim students who are prepared to work together for the betterment of the nation into an “umbrella organization” founded in the spirit of “Islamic brotherhood” (*ukhuwwah Islâmiyyah*). Its purpose is to intensify the role of Muslim students within the larger reform movement so as to better enable progress toward the realization of a “just and prosperous nation,” and the development of a civil society (*masyarakat Madani*) well-grounded in religious values (KAMMI, 4 October 1998). The organization considers the student movement, like the *umat*, to be a “moral force” capable of greatly affecting the nation’s future. For this reason, it expresses deep concern for maintaining student activism and the *reformasi* movement in general as truly moral initiatives. It has made deliberate efforts to safeguard what it has called the “authenticity” and “legitimacy” of the student movement, which it

worries could be damaged by the radicalization or politicization of certain student elements, as well as other Islamist groups.

In all aspects of the role that KAMMI has defined for itself, it attempts to act as a moral force directly affecting others involved in the reform struggle in addition to influencing the course of governmental policies. It does not merely attempt to pressure national leaders, but it seeks to also influence Indonesia's citizenry to uphold the nation's ideals, the *umat* to assert its collective voice, and other student groups to act in an honorable and nonviolent manner in demanding reforms. It frequently attempts to confront specific issues and draw attention to particular problems, yet it broadly prioritizes wide-scale moral reform as the foundation upon which true reform must be built.

This article provides an investigation of KAMMI's role in the *reformasi* movement with respect to its relationship with the nation, the *umat*, and the larger student movement. As it explores the pressures that have confronted Islamic students throughout the period, it addresses some of the most salient topics currently being debated in Indonesian society. Most importantly, it provides an analysis of KAMMI's stance toward the legitimacy of former president B. J. Habibie's government and its right to lead reform as opposed to the positions of several "radical" student groups which demanded the formation of a transitional government; its position on the politicization of Islamic symbols *vis-à-vis* the activities of certain "hard-line" Islamist organizations; and its commitment to peaceful action and the rejection of the use of violence as a form of protest. I argue that, in spite of its collegiality with right-wing Muslim organizations, several of which have been criticized as resistant to reform, self-interested, or politically opportunistic, KAMMI has made a critical contribution to the reform process. Most significantly, it has demonstrated that, contrary to what certain Islamic groups have urged, being a devout Muslim does not preclude struggling for democratic reform, nor voicing opposition to the government. Likewise, in spite of its solidarity with other student groups, several of which have been accused of being politically motivated, manipulated by partisan power brokers, or naively desirous of anarchy, KAMMI has shown that a student organization can apply strong pressure on national leaders, yet refrain from violent altercations which promote civil unrest and societal breakdown. The group's ongoing activities in reaction to the divisive conflicts that have erupted in the regions of

Aceh, Ambon, and East Timor are also significant, yet have not been analyzed within the scope of this paper. Rather, the focus of this writing is on KAMMI's role in Indonesia's recent political transition, especially the pivotal events of 1998, which set the stage for Indonesia's transition from an authoritarian state to the world's third largest democracy.

Inception

KAMMI was founded by Islamist student activists on March 29, 1998 after the completion of a five-day national meeting of an Islamic student organization held on the campus of the Muhammadiyah University in Malang, East Java. According to interviews with leaders of the organization's branches in Surabaya and Yogyakarta in February and March of 1999, KAMMI was born out of a shared sense of crisis. As students from across the country reported on conditions in their respective regions, it was apparent that extreme concern for the nation's deteriorating political situation was held in all quarters. In the off hours of the conference, activists debated strategies to address the political and economic crises that were confronting the Indonesian people. The fruit of those discussions, the formation of KAMMI, reflects the consensus that was reached by activists at that time that the best way to affect change on a national level was to coordinate a nationwide action campaign leading masses of Islamist students in protests pushing for social, political, and economic reforms. It was through the organization of these large Islamist student demonstrations that KAMMI quickly earned its reputation.

In the days leading up to KAMMI's formation, more than 60 delegations of students from various parts of the country had assembled in Malang, for the tenth annual all-Indonesian Friendship Forum of the Institute for Campus Proselytizing (Forum Silaturahmi Lembaga Dakwah Kampus—FS-LDK)—a rather active group aiming to promote and coordinate Muslim proselytizing activities on college campuses throughout Indonesia. As was clarified by a representative of the FS-LDK communication center in Bandung (Budi Mulyana, *Gatra*, 2 May 1998), the assembly itself did not spawn KAMMI. Rather, the new organization was created out of informal discussions held between student activists outside of FS-LDK's formal agenda, and after the conference was officially closed.

The Malang Declaration (KAMMI, 1998), a statement that was produced and put forward on the final day of the conference as a

result of the activist's resolve to form an Islamist student "pressure group," expressed the position of the new organization quite simply:

Arising from a deep concern for the national crisis which is overwhelming this nation, and being prompted by a sense of moral responsibility in regards to the ongoing suffering of its citizenry, as well as having a strong conviction of the need to play an active role in the process of change and improvement, we, all Indonesian Muslim students, (*kami segenap mahasiswa muslim Indonesia*) declare the formation of: The Indonesian Muslim Student Action Union (KAMMI).

It is important to note the conspicuous use of the word "all" (*segenap*) in reference to those making the declaration. KAMMI's claim of representing *all* Indonesian Muslim students implied several things: First, it asserted the new organization's national character—a valid representation since students from many parts of the country took part in its founding. Second, it framed itself as an organization maintaining an open and inclusive attitude by inviting the involvement of all Muslim students—including those involved with other Islamic student groups. This posture helped greatly expand the possibility of inter-group cohesion within the student movement as a whole, while it also emphasized the movement's plurality. Third, however, the wording implied a certain legitimacy in representing *all* Muslim students—a claim which has been criticized by members of other Islamic student groups.

Since KAMMI's base of support was consolidated out of the established network of campus mosques represented by LDK, it benefited from a previously established community, yet also inherited some of its confines. The campus mosque network, although considered conservative by most measures, represents a very different community than that of the rightist Islamist groups associated with the Dewan Dakwah organization.³ The political parties that evolved out of these organizations, the Partai Keadilan (Justice Party) and the Partai Bulan Bintang (Crescent Star Party) respectively, reflected these divisions. KAMMI also holds ideological divisions with several other Islamic student groups. HMI—the Islamic Students Association (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam), for example, represents modernist Muslim interests much like KAMMI, yet it has a more secure position within the country's established political order. Although the two groups have worked together on various campaigns, several KAMMI members have articulated that they preferred membership in KAMMI because they felt that HMI's unwillingness to criticize

former members entrenched in the New Order government hampered students' reform efforts. The Association of Muhammadiyah Students (IMM) and The Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (PMII) both remain somewhat affiliated with their respective parent organizations, the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama, and thus tend to reflect the character of these massive organizations as well as the political forces that emerged from their folds.

Regardless of the ideological chasms between Muslim groups in Indonesia, one of the major components of KAMMI's mission has been to build an organization that is able to bridge traditional boundaries between various Muslim student groups. The core idea was to take advantage of the various national associations to which many activists belonged, in order to develop a network through which large numbers of Islamist students would be able to work collaboratively in order to voice common aspirations for change. The feasibility of the project was realized soon after activists returned to their respective institutions from the FS-LDK meeting with the goal of setting up local branches. Groups in approximately 25 cities responded almost immediately and founded KAMMI chapters.

“United Action”

In an interview with *Republika* (17 April 1998), KAMMI's founding chairperson, Fahri Hamzah, explained that the organization would implement a three-fold strategy to ensure successful operations. First, it would conduct networking in campus mosques throughout Indonesia. Tellingly, in a declaratory meeting with journalists and Islamicist supporters at the Arif Rahman Hakim Mosque near UI's Salemba Campus on March 30th, Haryo Setyoko, General Secretary of KAMMI explained that, “Mosque students do not merely address spirituality, they also implement *reformasi* in accordance with the guidance of Islamic law (*shari'ah*)” (Jafar Abuthalib, 13 April 1998). Second, the group would elicit support from Indonesian students who are studying outside of the country in order to rally international support. Large Indonesian student populations in Germany and Japan in particular have produced quite active KAMMI branches. Third, it would attempt to forge connections with other groups including students of rural Islamic boarding schools—traditionally an extremely important source of political power in Indonesia.

The object of the strategy was to build a popular base of Islamist students that could be mobilized to participate in the *reformasi* cam-

paign. According to representatives of KAMMI in Yogyakarta (Interview, 12 March 1999), the organization initially viewed mass action as the most effective method of advancing issues within the tightly controlled political environment of the Soeharto regime. In order to develop mechanisms to better express the voice of Islamist students within the larger student movement then, they advanced a format of “united action” with the intent of facilitating collaboration between various student groups in coordinating multi-campus protests against the New Order and its failing policies.

The success of the endeavor was apparent almost immediately. Within ten days, KAMMI began to prove its organizational ability by staging large protests in various cities throughout the country. It coordinated a highly successful series of demonstrations called the Great Meetings of Indonesian Students and Citizens (*Rapat Akbar Mahasiswa dan Rakyat Indonesia*), which were held at several of the nation’s high profile mosques in April and May of 1998.

The first such meeting, held on April 9th, took the form of a free speech rally at the gates of Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta—an event that was joined by approximately 800 people. Demonstrators called on the government to implement immediate political and economic reforms, and also demanded that the Ministry of Education withdraw its highly publicized declarations forbidding students from engaging in “political activities” on campus (*Suara Pembaruan*, 11 April 1998).

As its members commonly incorporated Islamic symbols and rituals into their demonstrations, and frequently held activities at mosques, KAMMI quickly developed a distinctive style of protest that was covered with enthusiasm by the media. In Surabaya for example on April 13, KAMMI held a Great Meeting in front of the Nuruzzaman Mosque on the campus of Airlangga University, timed so that protestors were able to join other worshippers for the Muslim midday prayer (*shalat dzuhur*). *Republika* (14 April 1998), an Islamist newspaper, reported that the demonstration was punctuated by repeated shouts of *Allahu Akbar*, the common Arabic phrase used in daily prayers meaning “God is Great” (*takbir*). Approximately 1000 Islamist protesters, more than half of them women clad in traditional Muslim head coverings (*jilbab*) and sporting green scarves and badges emblazoned with KAMMI’s logo, joined the action that ended with a dramatic mass prayer.

As Friday is considered the holiest day of the week in Islam, it is

customary for Muslims to visit their mosques at midday every Friday in order to pray publicly. Schools and offices in Indonesia usually have an extended lunch hour at this time to enable people to observe the practice. Friday afternoons then are often paced rather leisurely with many spending the rest of the day out of the office. For this reason, KAMMI's largest actions were often scheduled to take place after Friday midday prayer (*shalat Jumat*). Since such events brought student demonstrators off campus and into involvement with large numbers of the general public at prayer times, these mass rallies made a strong impact on Indonesian Muslims.

KAMMI's second "Great Meeting" took place at Jakarta's well-known Al-Azhar Grand Mosque at mid-afternoon on Friday, April 10th, 1998. With at least 5000 (*Republika*, 11 April 1998) and as many as 10,000 (*Jakarta Post*, 11 April 1998) KAMMI supporters mixing with the usual crowds attending Friday prayer, the meeting was undoubtedly one of the largest off-campus demonstrations held by a student group in the three months of heavy protests that preceded Soeharto's resignation. The event is remembered as one of the first off-campus demonstrations in Jakarta during that period—a time when the nation's security apparatus was instructed to take violent opposition to student demonstrators who dared to move outside of campus gates.

Gatra (Priyono, 18 April 1998) asserted that the Jakarta rally's success "indicated that the newly established KAMMI (was) starting to show their power." Certainly, by drawing large crowds and a diverse stage of participants, its networking ability was evident. Students from as far away as Airlangga University (Unair) in Surabaya, the University of Brawijaya (Unibraw) in Malang, Gadjah Mada University (UGM) in Yogyakarta, the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), and the Bogor Institute of Agriculture (IPB), joined Jakarta students from the National Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN), the University of Indonesia (UI), and other institutions of higher learning, for prayers, exclamations of praise for the prophet Muhammad, and a series of rousing speeches denouncing the government and its handling of various crises. The meeting was then closed with a mass prayer led by a delegation from Jakarta's Al-Syafiiyah Islamic University.

Republika (17 April 1998) noted that the event was probably the "largest and most complete" demonstration of the period, in part, as a result of the fact that KAMMI was able to attract well-known stu-

dent senate leaders from the nation's most prestigious universities, such as Rama Pratama of UI, and Febri Nurhidayat of ITB. This ability to bridge boundaries between religious and secular student organizations helped build a collaborative atmosphere within the diverse student movement as a whole, and also demonstrated the plurality of voices calling for reform.

According to an interview with KAMMI members in Yogyakarta (12 March 1999), the success of the Great Meeting in Jakarta encouraged several other chapters to push through with plans for organizing similar mass gatherings. On three consecutive days in April, KAMMI activists in Central Java held mass rallies. The first took place on April 23rd in Solo where 1000 students gathered on the campus of UNS. On April 25th in Semarang, KAMMI rallied another 1000 students for a protest at Diponegoro University (Undip) where they were said to have turned the North side of campus into a "sea of green *jilbabs*" (Muslim women's head-coverings). The students voiced criticism of the national government, yet also used the opportunity to confront the regional authority by rejecting the candidacy of Central Java's Governor, H. Soewardi, who was "running" for a new term (*Jawa Pos*, 26 April 1998, p. 6).

The most impressive of KAMMI's Central Java gatherings however, was held by Yogyakarta-based activists along the boulevard cutting through UGM's campus on Friday, April 24, 1998. *Republika* (25 April 1998) estimated that at least 20,000 university students, high school students, artists, and other members of society attended. The event reportedly took place without incident although outside of the campus hundreds of security forces were stationed on full alert. Ridaya Laode Ngkowe, the head of UGM's Student Senate was quoted as proclaiming in his oration at the rally that if the demands of the students were not soon met, the "strength of the waves of protesters would certainly swell." Events of the day in other parts of the country quickly proved his prediction to be correct as security forces encountered increasingly large and determined groups of demonstrators nationwide.

Through the month of May, KAMMI proceeded with the implementation of planned Great Meetings in other parts of the country. While its demonstrations on the islands of Kalimantan and Bali were considerably smaller than those on Java, large turnouts in Sumatra continued the group's momentum and proved that KAMMI had much more than simply a Javan appeal. On May 8th for example, approxi-

mately 6000 students attended a KAMMI Great Meeting in Padang, West Sumatra held at Universitas Negeri Padang (formerly IKIP Padang). KAMMI's Medan branch then organized a rally in conjunction with members of the organization's Lampung chapter which drew more than 3000 supporters to the Rector's office at the USU in Medan on May 19th (KAMMI Japan, December 1998). With its national network of activists securely in place, KAMMI then concentrated its energies on participating in the development of plans for a truly massive nationwide protest that would send a clear message to the Soeharto regime that the movement for reform was united, and that the student's demands must be addressed.

Nonviolent Reform (*Reformasi Damai*)

KAMMI's large demonstration at UGM on April 24th was reported as hardly more than a footnote by many newspapers, since violent conflict that had erupted between students and security forces that day in at least three major cities overshadowed the peaceful protest in Yogyakarta. In the Sumatran cities of Medan and Jambi, as well as in Mataram on the island of Lombok, students clashed violently with police after being physically restricted from marching off campus (*Agence France Presse*, 25 April 1998). The worst violence was in Medan where, after three running days of altercations, security personnel beat protesters with rattan canes, lobbed tear gas canisters, and fired rubber bullets in efforts to control students who fought back with volleys of stones and Molotov cocktails. In the end, 40 students were injured and five were missing after allegedly being abducted by police (*Jakarta Post*, 27 April 1998).

KAMMI's peaceful Great Meetings stood in stark contrast to the escalating conflicts between students and the security apparatus. Fears of a military "crackdown" on demonstrators were widespread by the time of the Medan incident, yet most student groups, including KAMMI, continued to expand the scope of their operations. KAMMI members in Surabaya (Interview, 10 February 1999), while reflecting on the possibility of injury or loss of life, remarked, "We were not going to stop struggling until we saw that the government was serious about reforms... Why stop? We had not done anything wrong. Our actions were conducted in a peaceful manner all the way through." They explained that in steadfastly maintaining a nonviolent approach, KAMMI's members felt that they had no need to worry about a crackdown because they gave security officers no cause for

retaliation.

It is clear that KAMMI's demonstrations have been widely recognized as being amongst the least prone to violence. In a *Gatra* (16 May 1998) interview with various student leaders on the issue of violence, Fahri Hamzah, KAMMI's chair, emphasized that the organization securely guards its commitment to *reformasi damai*—peaceful reformation. He asserted that:

We have a moral stance. If there is a group that desires to cause a disturbance, please, they are welcome to leave our ranks. If there is a group that wants to throw stones, please, we invite the apparatus to arrest them. Therefore, we do not need to be prohibited from leaving campus; in fact, KAMMI has been at the forefront of student action off-campus for this reason... We are able to guard the coordination of mass action of thousands of people. Not just action together in big cities like Jakarta, Bogor, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya, but also actions in smaller cities like Purwokerto dan Pasuruan have been implemented by KAMMI in an orderly manner—even in areas that are sensitive to conflict.

KAMMI's peaceful implementation of social action has been augmented by its rhetoric through which its leaders have diligently emphasized to the media the group's intention of pursuing its goals in a nonviolent manner. Press reports on the organization's activities have frequently mentioned the non-confrontational character of its demonstrations. Three separate newspapers on April 11th, for example, mentioned KAMMI's peaceful approach at its Al-Azhar protest in Jakarta. *Jakarta Post* (11 April 1998, p. 1) noted banners declaring support for "peaceful reform." *Republika* (11 April 1998, p. 12), under a headline stating, "Approximately 5,000 Muslim Students Call for Peaceful Action," quoted Fahri Hamzah, KAMMI's chair, as saying that "students must implement action to demand political and economic reform, but that must be done in a peaceful manner avoiding violence." Finally, *Merdeka* (11 April 1998, p. 1), in a headline that noted that students were "Demonstrating But Also Smiling," quoted Fahri as saying that every action must be peaceful, and tellingly, that "KAMMI is careful so that their pure actions are not misinterpreted or exaggerated" by observers. It is this sense of carefulness that has characterized KAMMI's press releases, interviews, as well as activism in the intense period of struggle that led up to Soeharto's departure from the presidency.

The leaders of KAMMI's Yogyakarta branch (Interview, 12 March 1999) explained that in regards to activism, even though holding mass demonstrations in public places is characteristic of the group's activi-

ties, members maintain a principle that mass action should not cause a disturbance. One activist clarified KAMMI's perspective on the issue:

For KAMMI...upsetting general public orderliness is prohibited for group members. We are trying to broaden society. So when we demonstrate, we do not just block the highway and interrupt traffic. Indeed, that is one of the characteristics of KAMMI that distinguishes it from other groups. The problems that we address are in regards to the nation, humanity, fundamental human rights—issues and discourses which are the same as other students acting as a moral force... However, the strategies that we use are different. We do not employ an anarchist approach. We are far from that. Our way of engaging in struggle does not utilize the tactic of conflict... Rather, we prioritize the interests of society. It is true that we struggle against brutality, and face off with an authoritarian military... But we must have a strategy, and that strategy is that we do not act so that we add to the suffering of the people... The strategy that we use is quiet—dialectics and negotiation between the citizenry, which are represented by student groups, and the government, the state, the military. So even though we struggle, we avoid forms of action that have an anarchic character, that incites clashes, that necessitates victims.

It is this “difference in strategy” that has been most frequently cited by members of Islamist student groups as the single most important characteristic that differentiates Indonesian *Islamist* student activism from that of other student groups—including other *Islamic* student groups. The Yogyakarta Moslem Students League (Liga Mahasiswa Muslim Yogyakarta—LMMY), for example, was described by *Suara Hidayatullah*, (May, 1998) as the “fiercest” of student groups in Yogyakarta, even though many of its members are active in other Islamic student groups such as HMI and PII. HMI members themselves have on occasion been known to engage in violent conflict with security forces. One HMI chapter in Jakarta for instance proudly displays a heap of stones used for engagements with security officers inside a small museum commemorating the reform movement located inside their branch headquarters. The director of the chapter explained tersely, “They have guns, we have rocks” (Interview, 13 November 1998).

According to KAMMI's Surabaya chapter representatives (Interview, 2 February 1999), violent conflict such as that is not considered a “pure action” for students. One asserted that students should utilize “just moral force” (expressed as an English statement inserted in an Indonesian sentence), and not contribute to societal hardship by engaging in “anarchical actions that cause fear in society.” He explained

that since violence contributes to social instability, KAMMI views student activism that does stray from a nonviolent commitment as “unwise and improper.”

In spite of this difference in perspective on strategy, as well as occasional ideological disagreements with certain groups, KAMMI’s leaders in Surabaya (Interview, 19 February 1999) expressed an unshakable solidarity with other members of the student movement in general. One activist explained:

If there are radical student groups, who we know have an agenda that is the same as ours...then we are together with them. However, if we have different issues, we will probably each go our own roads even though we are both still definitely within the student corridor, still definitely within the student circle. Indeed, radical student groups are actually not able to be anticipated, not able to be prevented; therefore, we do not take responsibility for them.

When asked about the situation of escalating conflict in a *Gatra* interview (16 May 1998), Fahri Hamzah avoided condemning other student groups who had engaged in violent confrontations with security officers in several areas of the country. He asserted that the “violence that has been referred to as an excess of student action is simply a method of shifting people’s attention” away from the real issues at hand. In particular, he pointed to the government’s refusal to undertake total reform as the root cause of such conflicts.

A Moral Crisis

While KAMMI tended to withhold direct condemnation of individual government leaders, and even recognized Soeharto’s contributions in advancing economic development and creating prosperity in certain social tiers, it expressed harsh criticism of the New Order political system. In its first position statement (KAMMI, 29 March 1999), the organization provided an overview of the various crises plaguing the nation and asserted that the recent degeneration of the economic system was inseparable from the degeneration of the political system. In repudiation of the government’s position that economic development could only be maintained in Indonesia through the stability afforded by a tightly controlled political environment, KAMMI contended that “the format and culture of the political system had given rise to an extremely unstable relationship between the national leadership and people’s political participation.” It attacked the government’s domination of the economic sector and empha-

sized that “economic reform must be accompanied by political reform.” It also lambasted hypocrisy in the nation’s legal sector and called for an overhaul of legal statutes, as well as the implementation of reform within judicial bodies.

While KAMMI viewed the nation’s problems in a holistic manner and called for simultaneous economic, political, and judicial reforms, it also framed the national dilemma as a moral crisis and accentuated the intense need for social reform. In particular, it lamented the “mushrooming” of the culture of “KKN” in government circles—that is the *kolusi*, *korupsi* and *nepotisme* (Indonesian renderings of the English words “collusion,” “corruption,” and “nepotism”) that ran rampant in the late New Order era, and it decried the selective enforcement of the law in favor of those holding power. In the same document (KAMMI, 29 March 1999) the group asserted that, “the filth and shame that now covers our faces truthfully reflects...our disregard of values and morals.” It then offered a reminder for those who may have lost sight of their religious grounding during the earlier economic boom by highlighting the following verse from the Qur’an (Surat Al-An’am [Chapter 6], verse 44):

But when society forgot Allah’s teachings and admonitions, We opened the doors of wealth and luxury to them, until, when they rejoiced in what they were given, We suddenly caused a terrifying disaster to befall upon them; so that they were stunned and in utter despair.

Whether the disaster that was alluded to was intended to represent the economic crisis or the swelling reform movement that threatened to engulf the government is uncertain. What is clear however, is that KAMMI members were outraged with what they considered to be the unethical behavior of the Soeharto regime and were determined to fight for changes that would entail a greater alignment between policymaking and religious ideas of morality.

Rather than advancing a strictly Islamic interpretation of the values and morals that they deemed crucial for solving the nation’s crises and improving society, KAMMI pointed out the importance of advancing *universal* religious values. They asserted that since most Indonesians citizens are Muslims, the vast majority of the population is bound by “Islamic values and morals that are glorious and always require goodness.” Yet, they added that the Christian, Hindu and Buddhist religious values that are followed by smaller portions of the population also have “values and norms that are glorious and univer-

sal.” “If *reformasi* has the goal of bringing about a return of strength,” they argued, “then logically all steps of reform must be motivated by a consciousness of morality, and strengthened with moral reform based upon the values and universal religious norms which are followed in this society (KAMMI, 29 March 1999).”

For this reason, as KAMMI advanced its reform agenda and voiced criticisms of, and demands on national leaders, it also addressed the perceived need for moral reform within the general populace. In a list of demands announced at the Al-Azhar Great Meeting on April 10th (KAMMI, 10 April 1998), KAMMI invited all members of society to “return to the truth...leave behind habits allowing for the possibility of immorality, disturbances, and sin...and adorn the country with group recitations of the confession of faith (*dhikir*), morals, and friendship, so that all may exist in the circle of Allah.”

Even though KAMMI called on all members of society to undertake moral reform at a personal level, national leaders were certainly singled out as being at the center of the moral crisis. Another demand voiced by the organization at the Al-Azhar gathering was: “Government leaders must take responsibility for the crisis by first apologizing to the Indonesian people, then by repenting and begging for the forgiveness of Allah (*taubat*), and finally by being prepared to make total reforms immediately or withdraw” from positions of leadership in order to make room for others to lead (KAMMI, 10 April 1998).

Confronting Authority

Notably absent from KAMMI’s position statements in April of 1998 were any direct calls for Soeharto’s resignation, alteration of the state’s power structure that is marked by military involvement in politics, or the implementation of democratic principles in governance. These demands had long been emphasized by other student activist groups, and may have been included in KAMMI’s unpublished interests, yet they had not yet been delineated as part of the group’s formal public agenda.

While clearly critical of the regime’s policies, Fahri took a softer tone than other student leaders who had already demanded Soeharto’s resignation openly. He reportedly stated in late March that “if Soeharto changes and comes to the forefront of reform so that society experiences (improvement), it is not impossible that we would even support Soeharto” (Jafar Abuthalib, 13 April 1998). For KAMMI,

he explained, what was most important was evidence that reforms were being implemented and that improvement of the country's socio-economic condition was being achieved.

Fahri's remark should be considered in its context in order to more fully understand the organization's position on the issue of national leadership. The remark was offered at a meeting on UI's Salemba Campus on March 30th in response to questions of whether KAMMI would support the student-military dialogue that was proposed by Minister of Defense and Commander of the Indonesian Armed Forces, General Wiranto. Fahri, like other student leaders, rejected the invitation for various reasons. He emphasized at that time, that the important thing for members of KAMMI was evidence of change within the government, not dialogue. At the same event, Haryo Setyoko, KAMMI's General Secretary, clarified why KAMMI was not insistent on changing the regime's personnel. He argued that for KAMMI, "what is important is moral, political, economic, and legal reform. If that is accomplished then the replacement of people who are in power will occur by itself. But without that, the people are able to be replaced but the system remains broken" (*Suara Hidayatullah*, May 1998).

Many student activists countered that such a position was naïve, that substantial change would never occur in Indonesia without a change in leadership for the very reason that the nation's leaders had blocked reform for decades in order to protect the narrow interests of a corrupt elite. Leaders of KAMMI certainly understood this position, yet were quite careful in choosing their demands in order to retain an objective and principled stance, and also to avoid the possibility of retaliation against their operations. Through the bold action of taking massive student demonstrations off-campus, it is clear that KAMMI leaders were willing to take risks in order to apply firm pressure on the government, yet they cautiously directed their published criticisms at policies, rather than persons, in order to lessen the possibility of government reprisals.

It was perhaps this stance that prompted suspicions of KAMMI early on. One self-proclaimed "democracy observer" alleged in mid-April that the formation of KAMMI represented the splintering of the student movement. In a posting on an internet mailing list, (Indopubs, 15 April 1998), KAMMI was accused of playing a role in protests directed against Chinese businessmen and intellectuals in early 1998⁴. The sender also alleged that KAMMI was paid by General

Prabowo Subianto, Soeharto's son-in-law, to engage in the proposed student-military dialogue in order to try to legitimize the government's "reform" protocol. This research uncovered no evidence that supported either of those claims. On the contrary, KAMMI rejected dialogue with government representatives and, as its demonstrations continued through the months of April and May, its criticism of the nation's civilian and military leadership grew increasingly vociferous.

In a statement issued on April 20th for instance the organization asserted that "the government's unwillingness or unknowingness regarding the demands for reform shows that...at this time the government is running without a clear direction or pattern" (KAMMI, 20 April 1998). On the 24th, another statement charged that the nation was experiencing a "huge disaster because we are led by a government that does not have a 'sense of crisis'" (KAMMI, 24 April 1998). It reminded national leaders that the support of the people was of primary importance in governance, and called on officials to develop a more transparent decision-making process and a sense of humility in carrying out their duties.

By May 1st, after Soeharto declared that reforms would not be able to be implemented constitutionally until after his presidential term had run its full course in the year 2003 (*Jakarta Post*, 2 May 1998), student groups around the country became enraged. KAMMI members who had demonstrated a guarded approach in voicing dissent now began to aim direct criticism at the nation's ruler. Just a few days later, after the government announced cuts in subsidies for basic commodities, KAMMI further increased its reproofs of the regime. In a press release (KAMMI, 5 May 1998), the organization asked, "Where is justice?" and exclaimed, "Hey, government, *astaghfirullah al-'azîm!*"—a common Arabic phrase that literally means 'May God forgive me,' but which is frequently uttered when one is shocked by immoral behavior (Echols & Shadily, 1989). It called on the nation's Supreme Court (Mahkamah Agung) to bring the government to trial since it had already seriously violated the constitution by raising tariffs without the approval of the DPR.

In regards to the armed forces, a similar pattern of increasing criticism was expressed. In its April press releases, KAMMI tactfully called on the military to use its formidable influence to strengthen the *reformasi* movement. Since Soeharto had originally stepped into the presidency from a position as de facto commander of the armed forces,

gaining the support of the military in the fight against Soeharto's administration was certainly considered to be a difficult challenge. KAMMI, however, ventured to remind the military of what it considered to be its proper duty. In the declaration read at the Al-Azhar rally, it called on the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) to take an "honest" position in the reform struggle, and reminded military leaders that "ABRI is owned by the Indonesian people and is not a tool of the government" (KAMMI, 10 April 1998). Ten days later in Bogor, KAMMI announced that ABRI should play a role as a catalyst of *reformasi* (KAMMI, 20 April 1998). It argued:

For one thing, it is hoped that ABRI will make serious efforts to understand the aspirations of the people...and be involved in the formulation of conceptual ideas regarding reform in a concrete and detailed manner. A second thing that ABRI should do, is make serious efforts to convince the government to immediately take steps toward reform...It needs to be explained that ABRI is morally responsible for the condition of this nation, since their socio-political role has been extremely dominant since the early beginnings of the New Order until the present.

It is this socio political role, when coupled with the military's national defense role, which is known in Indonesia as the *dwi-fungsi* policy. The appropriateness of *dwi-fungsi* had long been debated in Indonesian intellectual circles, and later became one of the most important issues of the reform period after student groups began to consider the military to be one of the most formidable barriers to true reform. Before Soeharto's resignation, however, many pro-reformist groups felt that lobbying the army to join the reform movement was still possible and certainly a better tactic than directly rebelling against it. KAMMI, in this spirit, directed several entreaties at the armed forces in the hopes of persuading them to shift their loyalties from protecting their leader to supporting the people. In a position statement released in May (KAMMI, 1 May 1998) for example, it communicated the following request for ABRI's support soon after Soeharto had arrogantly insisted he would crush those who opposed him:

In observation of the instruction for the safety apparatus to take action against societal elements that continue to demand *reformasi*...KAMMI asks that ABRI returns to prioritizing its position as the guardians of the aspirations of the people and the catalysts of progressive change. The adage, 'what is best for the people is best for ABRI' must soon be realized.

In mid-May, however, military forces demonstrated that student

protestors were still considered to be “the enemy” as what was later described as “renegade security forces” gunned down students at Trisakti University in Jakarta killing four and wounding many more. KAMMI immediately asserted that the killings, which were conducted in spite of the fact that there had been no real threat to the safety of security personnel, indicated that: (1) the students would continue with activism until those holding power were removed, even as “the bullets of the soldiers were used up (on students);” (2) ABRI must once again return to an honest position, that it not be the “enemy of students,” and, as was ordered by the late General Sudirman, it “should be at the forefront of the people’s struggle, not the guardians of power;” and (3) the authorities have already “exceeded their time,” and the possibility of nationwide chaos was increasing because the people had been put into a precarious position because of the “regime’s tyranny” (KAMMI, 13 May 1998).

In the wake of the Trisakti University shootings, and the subsequent rioting which erupted around the country, KAMMI issued a statement (14 May 1998) which concisely explained the group’s final position against Soeharto:

Pitifully, national leaders have not immediately taken the necessary actions to contend with the rioting and looting, so that they have generated fear in our society. If this is allowed to continue, it will paralyze Jakarta, and in turn will threaten political stability and the national economy. Because of that...KAMMI feels the need to take further action in reference to President Soeharto’s statement that he is prepared to step down if the citizenry desires that he do so, by urging the People’s Consultative Council (MPR) of the Republic of Indonesia to immediately organize a Special General Session for the purpose of requiring Those Entrusted with the Mandate of the MPR to uphold their responsibility and implement a transfer of power in an open, just, and honest manner. KAMMI explicitly rejects all forms of transfer of power that are done in an underhanded manner.

KAMMI’s call for Soeharto’s resignation joined many other statements already issued by members of Indonesia’s academic community inviting Soeharto’s relinquishment of the nation’s highest office with varying levels of politeness. Many rectors and faculty members had openly supported the student’s activities for months, yet, after the Trisakti tragedy, hundreds of public figures and societal groups “closed ranks” with students in protest of the regime’s heavy-handed rule. By mid-May, as members of opposition parties and non-governmental agencies long active in the pro-democracy movement stepped

up their pressure, members of Soeharto's own government began to join the growing chorus for his removal.

One of the most conspicuous voices inviting Soeharto to step down came from Harmoko, the Chair of the MPR, who, in what many considered to be a *coup de grâce*, asked for the president's resignation on May 18th. Soeharto loyalist General Wiranto, however, desperately attempted to counter the powerful tide against his president by asserting the Harmoko's call was merely a personal statement and had no constitutional basis. KAMMI subsequently released a position statement directed toward ABRI's leadership. They warned: "Do not continue in this manner until our national history records the terrible disgrace that ABRI is anti-people and rather precisely protecting the power of tyranny and nurturing the sickness of *korupsi, kolusi* and *nepotisme*" (KAMMI, 20 May 1998). The group's increasingly critical stance against both the government and the military reflected its heightening frustration with all components of the nation's leadership. In the two short months in which KAMMI had existed, it had evolved from a rather cautious critic to a vocal adversary of the existing regime.

"People Power"

The culmination of KAMMI's activities during the *reformasi* struggle, like those of most Indonesian students engaged in the movement, came on May 20, 1998 with massive rallies planned for National Awakening Day—an official holiday commemorating the foundation of a proto-nationalist student group⁵ in 1908. Enormous demonstrations were held in cities across the nation with huge crowds gathering to demand President Soeharto's resignation. The thousands of students who rallied under KAMMI's banner joined hundreds of thousands of others representing countless student organizations and educational institutions, as well as members of the general public who took part in mostly peaceful forms of protest demanding immediate changes in the nation's leadership.

Antara (21 May 1998), the government's news agency, reported that nearly 25,000 students took over the local parliament building in Palu, Central Sulawesi, while *Suara Pembaruan* (21 May 1998) noted that approximately 50,000 students held a rally in the central Karebosi square in Ujung Pandang, South Sulawesi. The *Jakarta Post* (21 May 1998) claimed that the Ujung Pandang rally actually drew as many as 150,000 people and estimated that in Central Java 50,000 students

marched off of their campuses in Semarang, while 50,000 more did the same in Purwokerto. *The South China Morning Post* (20 May 1998) reported that nearly 100,000 people gathered for protests in Bandung, 50,000 in Surabaya, and 30,000 in Solo. *Agence France Presse* (20 May 1998) reported that 10,000 students converged on the provincial parliament building in Medan, North Sumatra, while approximately the same number marched in Padang, West Sumatra.

KAMMI representatives in the city of Yogyakarta (Interview, 12 March 1999) confirmed that its members participated in the “long march” that was organized the same day by Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, the Kraton ruler⁶ of the Yogyakarta region. Noted as the largest single demonstration of the *reformasi* period, at least 600,000 protestors attended free speech rallies on various campuses, then, in defiance of the military’s orders against street protests, marched along 11 predetermined routes and gathered in the Alun-Alun Utara—the royal square on the north side of the Sultan’s Palace (*Jakarta Post*, 21 May 1999). The Sultan, in his address to the masses, publicly denounced the misuse of power by government leaders and called on Indonesia’s armed forces to “join the student reform movement.”

While KAMMI’s direct role in organizing any of the mass rallies that were held outside of Jakarta on National Awakening Day is as of yet undocumented, its role in promoting the holiday as a nationwide day of protest, and in directly planning and publicizing a massive demonstration in Jakarta on that day is quite clear. On the morning that the event was scheduled to take place, *Republika* (20 May 1998) reported on KAMMI’s role as an organizer of the action:

In accordance with an open invitation that has been circulated by KAMMI, the Reformasi Victory Day Action (*Aksi Hari Kemenangan Reformasi*) at the National Monument will be held today... KAMMI has mentioned that a million members of the Islamic community and citizens groups will recite laudations of the prophet together with the head of the Muhammadiyah, Dr. Amien Rais...

In support of leading reform figure Amien Rais,⁷ KAMMI spent weeks developing plans for the enormous rally that was to be held at the National Monument (Monas) in the center of Jakarta. Amien, a University of Chicago graduate and Political Scientist at UGM, was one of Indonesia’s most vocal critics of the Soeharto regime, and arguably the most active public figure pushing for reform since Indonesia’s economic and political crises erupted in the summer of 1997. At that time, as the elected chair of the Muhammadiyah—a 28

million-member modernist Muslim organization—he was highly influential in Islamist circles and well respected generally as an authority on Muslim issues. Formerly a New Order government insider, Amien had been appointed to chair the Council of Experts of the Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals, or ICMI (Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia). He resigned from the position however in 1996, shortly after drawing President Soeharto's ire by criticizing the government's suspicious dealings with an American mining corporation⁸ operating in Irian Jaya.

As the New Order government proved powerless in dealing with the nation's crises, its grounds for maintaining an authoritarian state withered. Amien, long a thorn in the government's side, threatened to unleash a "people power" movement⁹ in Jakarta with a million demonstrators marching in opposition to the regime unless Soeharto resigned from the presidency immediately, and those in official positions agreed to the implementation of reforms. KAMMI (18 May 1998) also used this phrase in warning "all political elites in the legislative and executive ranks, and ABRI, not to implement a change in national leadership as an effort to preserve the status quo, because it is 'people power' that should determine the nation's future."

Many feared that a massive people power movement would trigger another spate of violence in the capitol, which only a week before had experienced a deadly outburst of rioting. Approximately 1200 people died (Volunteers for Humanity figures cited in *Kompas*, 7 November 1999) most of whom were looters trapped inside burning buildings, and at least 66 women were confirmed by a government sponsored fact-finding team (TGPF) to have been raped in a campaign of terror directed against the Chinese-Indonesian community (*Jakarta Post*, 8 November 1998). Much of the unrest was thought to have been the work of "provocateurs," who may have been affiliated with a certain faction of the military.

With much concern for the citizen's safety, yet convinced of the necessity to apply as much pressure as possible at that point in time, KAMMI worked to prepare participants and members of the general public for peaceful action. The Muslim-oriented newspaper *Republika* (20 May 1998) expressed KAMMI's concern in a report entitled "The May 20th Action at Monas: Guard Yourself, Avoid Clashes." KAMMI reportedly asked that participants depart for the demonstration while reciting the Muslim laudation "God is great" (*takbir*), and then "avoid disturbances and violent acts that would work against the reform

efforts and a peaceful succession.” Amien Rais reportedly asked demonstrators to fast before marching since those who engage in fasting are believed to be better able to guard their emotions and less likely to be provoked. Amien also directed a warning to potential instigators of violence and those opposed to student action by asserting that there is a well-known religious injunction demanding the “promotion of good and banishment of evil” (*amar makruf nahi munkar*)—a concept that expresses an Islamic concept for community social action (Federspiel, 1995).

In the days leading up to National Awakening Day however, General Wiranto expressed hostility to the plan and deployed nearly half of the city’s 78,000 troops in the Monas Square area adjacent to the presidential palace (*Jakarta Post*, 21 May 1998). His fears of a violent overthrow of the government by a people’s movement were undoubtedly matched by concerns about the possibility of a coup d’état launched from within his own ranks.

There were also positive signs at that point that Soeharto might indeed resign without such a show of force as pressures mounting from within the government suggested that the president’s retirement was forthcoming. Amien was forced to consider that the 76-year old leader might even try to obstinately cling to his position while facing an ultimatum given by such a vocal critic as himself. In the end, Amien decided that the possibility of student casualties was too high to continue with the plan. The Reformasi Victory Day Action, as it was called, was called off at the last possible moment on the morning of May 20th in order to avoid probable conflict with the military and general chaos in the capitol. Fahri Hamzah of KAMMI was quoted (*Jakarta Post*, 21 May 1998) as stating that the decision was also based on news of the violent attack on students by military personnel the previous day in Surabaya. In that incident, students from Unair who had begun a free speech rally off-campus were reported to have been suddenly attacked by a truckload of military personnel and beaten with clubs. At least 21 students were injured—four critically including one who was beaten into a coma (*Media Indonesia*, 20 May 1998).

While there were doubts that Amien’s forces could realistically rally a million people, the threat put significant pressure on the regime and was certainly one of the major factors contributing to Soeharto’s resignation. In spite of their disappointment with the cancellation, thousands of students who were already mobilized and prepared for a day on the streets flooded instead into the People’s As-

sembly Complex (DPR/MPR) to join the ranks of the 12,000 or so students who had already occupied the site overnight.

With large numbers of troops guarding the National Monument, several student organizations decided on the evening of May 18th that they would focus their energies on voicing protest at the DPR/MPR complex (Interview with IAIN Activist, 23 March 1999). After hundreds of students had held productive demonstrations at the complex on the afternoon of the 18th when several opposition leaders met with government representatives, an evening meeting was held at the Indonesian Christian University (UKI) (Universitas Kristen Indonesia) between members of various student groups which had informally been calling themselves the Street Parliament (*Parlemen Jalan*). The decision was reached to implement a round the clock occupation of the DPR/MPR complex beginning the following morning.

Early on the 19th then, busloads of students from UI, IAIN, ITB and IPB converged on the site. By mid-afternoon, with reinforcements from various universities as well as citizens groups arriving in large groups, approximately 30,000 protestors had assembled. By the following day, the number of demonstrators demanding Soeharto's resignation at the DPR/MPR had grown to nearly 50,000.

Finally, faced with relentless student action, capable opposition leaders who were drawing much public support, escalating unrest, large numbers of the general public joining student protesters into the streets, and certain members of the nation's military demonstrating support for the reform movement, Soeharto's congressional leaders themselves eventually defected en masse and released a statement urging his resignation. On Thursday, May 21, 1998, after 32 years in office, President Soeharto officially resigned and named his Vice-President, B. J. Habibie, his successor—an act that would fuel intense debates and further student protests for months to come.

The Power Vacuum

On May 22, the day after Soeharto “moved behind the scenes” of Indonesian politics, KAMMI immediately released an international declaration (KAMMI, 22 May 1998) that reemphasized its commitment to *total* reform. It outlined its general stance as an organization struggling to replace the collapsed New Order with a “Reform Order” which would work toward the improvement of societal conditions and a return of the people's sovereignty. The statement reflected growing social tensions as the initial jubilation gave way to a realiza-

tion of the immense power vacuum created by Soeharto's withdrawal. Fears of a resurgence by Soeharto loyalists were now balanced by fears of a takeover by any of a number of emerging forces—each viewed as illegitimate by its opponents. KAMMI called upon all societal elements to “prioritize national interests and stand upon principles of justice, democracy, and also pure morality in creating an Indonesian society that is advanced and prosperous.” It appealed to the international community for support through the crisis, yet requested that it refrain from “political intervention.” Most interestingly, it re-emphasized its dedication to “working together with other elements of the *pro-reformasi* movement in struggling for change and for the improvement of the life of the nation.” It is this ambition of joining together with other groups and coordinating “united action” that was KAMMI's hallmark during the anti-Soeharto protests. However, it was also this spirit of collaboration that contributed to impressions that the group was linked to various militant Islamist groups on the political right.

In the days leading up to the historic transfer of power from Soeharto to Habibie, the situation in the capitol grew increasingly dangerous. Rumors of a coup attempt were rife in Jakarta as troops under General Prabowo's command surrounded the Vice-President's quarters on the day of the hand-over. Habibie himself later admitted to being frightened by the maneuver (*Antara*, 15 February 1999), as well as shaken by a personal confrontation, as an apparent power struggle unfolded between Prabowo and General Wiranto.

While Prabowo had long courted groups on the Islamic right in an attempt to develop a mass base, and had allegedly bankrolled certain militant Islamist organizations in the interest of grooming a wing of paramilitary support that could be mobilized for his own purposes, it is unclear whether KAMMI or its members were included in this network. Marcus Mietzner, a research fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta, mentioned that KAMMI was an organization that “had links to Prabowo, but which switched its allegiance in favor of Amien Rais in the last days of the Soeharto regime” (1999, p. 191). While it is likely that the group was approached, and may have carried out talks with Prabowo's representatives, suspicions of KAMMI's earlier affiliation with Prabowo have not been documented. Just days before Soeharto's resignation, KAMMI issued a statement entitled “Stop Mass Unrest, Avoid a Coup d'état” (14 May 1998) in an effort to counteract attempts by those who were

working to create a state of chaos in the capitol. There were well-founded fears that certain paramilitary groups, and possibly members of military units, were involved in inciting general rioting as well as directing violence against Indonesia's ethnic Chinese minority in order to justify a military crackdown.

KAMMI's relationship with Amien Rais during this period strongly overshadows any minor connection linking it with organizations seeking the installation of a new authoritarian power that might have improved the position of certain Muslim groups at the expense of the democracy movement. It also weakens accusations linking it with the right-wing Muslim groups that staged a militant show of support for B. J. Habibie's presidency at the DPR/MPR complex on May 22nd. As approximately 4000 students continued to hold the People's Assembly building demonstrating their rejection of Habibie after Soeharto resigned, at least half as many members of Islamic youth groups were shuttled into the complex to demonstrate support for the new government. Tension rose as arguments broke out between the two groups, with the militant Islamic youth groups threatening violence. One observer, Wimar Witoelar (personal communication July 1999) reported that a banner was unfurled and hoisted onto the DPR building proclaiming "Supporting Habibie equals Supporting Islam. Rejecting Habibie equals opposing Islam." Wimar observed that while KAMMI members may have been present on the periphery that day, they were not involved in this confrontation.

KAMMI, in spite of its orientation toward modernist interpretations of Islam and its fellowship with groups such as the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), which was chaired by Habibie, did not provide unconditional support for the new president's government in contrast to several other Muslim groups. Rather, the organization acted in solidarity with the student movement in general and maintained its pressure on the government to implement the reforms agreed upon by the vast majority of students. For this reason, KAMMI's forces during this period should be remembered as the mobilization team for Amien Rais's aborted "people power" movement, rather than clandestine supporters of what was feared to be the new representatives of the status quo.

During the contentious period immediately following Soeharto's resignation, KAMMI did indeed accept Habibie as a transitional leader—something that many student groups adamantly opposed to the bitter end of his tenure. KAMMI's acceptance, however, was ex-

tended only with the condition that a democratic election be implemented as soon as possible. In an article entitled, “The Transfer of National Leadership” (KAMMI, 1 June 1999), the group addressed the issue of Habibie’s legitimacy. It outlined the diametric positions held by various constitutional law experts on the legality of the transfer of power from Soeharto to Habibie. While it did not take a stance on the constitutionality of Habibie’s presidency, it identified that it sided in favor of accepting his position as a “fact of history.” The group held the opinion that since the legality of the transfer of power appeared to be a matter of endless debate with no clear authority able to settle the issue, it was best to focus on applying pressure on Habibie so that his government that would live up to the spirit of *reformasi*. It also clearly preferred Habibie’s leadership of a transitional government, rather than a military takeover, which it feared would occur if reformists with more radical positions attempted to force their agenda on a reluctant and entrenched elite. It argued that the nation’s stability and well-being was best served by allowing Habibie to proceed, albeit with the condition that he immediately begin implementing students’ demands for reform.

KAMMI’s insistence on the implementation of a democratic process as this time—an ideal long championed by other activist groups—represents a shift in the organization’s thinking. In the many press releases, position statements, and interviews that recorded its stance on the reform process prior to Soeharto’s resignation, the concept of democracy had rarely been articulated. Neither the Indonesian cognate “*demokrasi*” nor its synonym “*kerakyatan*” was mentioned as anything more than an abstract principle alongside broad ideals such as “morality” and “unity” upon which laws or policies were advised to be based. Direct calls for an election had also scarcely been made, and the acronym for general election, “*Pemilu*” (*pemilihan umum*), was not mentioned by KAMMI leaders up to this point.

Within days of Habibie’s ascendancy to the presidency, however, KAMMI joined most groups involved in the *reformasi* struggle in recognizing that a general election would be the only means to establish a legitimate government in Indonesia and end the dangerous power vacuum that left the nation in a volatile position. KAMMI’s Bandar Lampung branch for example demanded that an election with a “new political format” be held if the government was unable to solve the nation’s crises (*Suara Pembaruan*, 23 May 1998). In Jakarta, Fahri Hamzah also emphasized KAMMI’s aim of holding a national elec-

tion by asserting in a speech at the Muhammadiyah headquarters that even if Amien Rais, the group's preferred candidate, was to become president in the coming election, KAMMI would continue to struggle for a clean and honest government.

Amien Rais enjoyed KAMMI's support during the campaign to oust Soeharto and early in the post-New Order period. In mid-May at a meeting at the Al-Azhar Mosque when Amien Rais announced the formation of a public leadership team known as the Peoples' Mandate Council (Majelis Amanah Rakyat), KAMMI's leader, Fahri Hamzah, "in the name of KAMMI," had lent his support to Amien Rais "as the candidate to become the future leader of Indonesia" (*Kompas*, 16 May 1998). In the following months, however, as Amien remained equivocal on forming a political party of a devoutly Islamic orientation, many would-be Islamist supporters organized alternative groupings. These new political formations interested many of KAMMI's members more than Amien's emerging secularly-based National Mandate Party (PAN—Partai Amanat Nasional)¹⁰. In particular, KAMMI members flocked to support the Justice Party (Partai Keadilan), the self-proclaimed "party of the Ka'bah."

Fahri Hamzah explained that Partai Keadilan had its basis in campus circles, being comprised mainly of students and other youth. Its managing board consisted of personnel who were considered "pure" by Fahri for the reason that they had never been involved in any of the nation's established political parties. While Fahri explained that he joined Partai Keadilan for personal reasons and asserted that it would be "small-minded" to attempt to steer the masses of KAMMI supporters into Partai Keadilan's camp, many KAMMI members did defect from Amien's ranks along with Fahri when Partai Keadilan was launched in August of 1998 (*Republika*, 10 August 1998).

Transition to Ormas

KAMMI's commitment to the reform movement was reemphasized just a day after Soeharto's resignation as it displayed its ability to organize grand-scale meetings once again before the school year ended and students returned to their home communities for the summer vacation. On May 22, in several locations throughout the country, KAMMI coordinated events known in Arabic as *tabligh akbar*—mass religious meetings. While a meeting with 2500 participants was reported to have taken place in Padang, and another was noted in Semarang where KAMMI members unveiled banners that read: "Praise

be to Allah, Soeharto resigns" (*Jakarta Post*, 23 May 1998), the highest profile meeting was held at the Al-Azhar Grand Mosque in Jakarta, which drew upwards of 10,000 people. The purpose of the gathering was *sujud syukur*, bowing in thanks to Allah—in this case for Soeharto's dislodgment from the presidency. A ceremony was also conducted in honor of the Trisakti University students who had been killed during the *reformasi* struggle. Amien Rais led a mass prayer in which he expressed his hope that the victims would be received at Allah's side and emphasized that the *umat* must continue their struggle for reforms (*Republika* 23 May 1998).

With the change in national leadership achieved, and with KAMMI's member's political aspirations channeled through Partai Keadilan and other emerging political parties, the organization itself began to reevaluate its role in the *reformasi* movement. With the nation still deeply immersed in an economic crisis, KAMMI felt the need to attempt to transcend its popular image as simply another committed protest group, and carve itself a broader organizational legacy by developing a more socially engaged style of activism. According to leaders of KAMMI's Yogyakarta chapter (Interview, 12 March 1999), in its first congress, held in October of 1998, KAMMI members decided that the format of "united action" was not sufficiently effective for enabling the group to directly improve the fate of Indonesia's recently downtrodden masses. Members felt that it was time to develop a structure that would better equip the organization for the task of addressing tangible societal needs in addition to its sociopolitical agenda. For that reason, the format of "united action" was modified and the organization was reformed as a comprehensive societal organization (*Ormas*). Thus, demonstrations were no longer the group's sole focus. As a societal organization, KAMMI began to develop other activities in an effort to "find solutions to the complex problems of the economic crisis, political crisis, and various other crises that could not be sufficiently addressed by demonstrations alone." Informants explained that as a societal organization, KAMMI members were "better able to uphold their moral responsibility and guard the direction of *reformasi*," because in the post-Soeharto era, a multidimensional approach was deemed necessary to ensure meaningful societal change.

In line with new approach, KAMMI began to focus on social service projects during the summer of 1998 with the goal of working to "lessen the immediate problems confronting people." Members de-

scribed the development of a program to gather and distribute food-stuffs and funds to people in need, and the creation of legal services program for those who were considered oppressed; while at the same time it continued to press the government to reform policies it considered inappropriate, especially in the economic sector. These lobbying efforts focused particularly on the Social Network Program (JPS—Program Jaringan Sosial), one of the programs presented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with which KAMMI disagreed wholeheartedly because of the opportunities for corruption that it posed for high government officials. On this issue KAMMI applied pressure to the government to return the JPS loans, and attempted to stand as an observer of the fund's management and use.

In regards to their role as a societal organization, KAMMI intended to rise above the "opinion level" of social critics and move into the "operational level" as social movers. That is a level at which they hope to see the problems affecting the nation through to completion. Organizationally then, KAMMI's structure is currently divided into four areas. The first involves the task of analyzing and responding to national issues and state policy considerations—including the current issue of corruption in high government offices. The second involves the development of observer bodies to ensure that policies are being carried out in an appropriate manner. Election monitors and investigation teams sent to areas of conflict to record human right infringements are examples of these. The third area involves relief service to aid the nation's suffering people. Finally, the fourth area involves activism and educational activities, which includes the coordination of seminars and lectures, yet also the demonstrations through which KAMMI earned its widespread name recognition.

Although it appears that the organization has reformed itself much like a non-governmental organization (NGO), KAMMI's leaders claim that it is different from traditional Indonesian NGOs affiliated with the government or political parties because it is comprised of students who "are willing to stand directly beside the people in addressing the real problems with which they are faced" (Interview, 12 March 1999). This sense of *praxis*, of engaging in both active practice and theoretical conceptualization when engaging in any societal work¹¹, has characterized the organization's efforts up to the present. While it is clear that the organization's role as a "pressure group" attempting to shape government policies and public opinion continues to be the dominant theme under which KAMMI operates, its

socio-political agenda is frequently informed by its member's social development activities.

The Way Forward

After a short summer hiatus when its members concentrated primarily on poverty alleviation and other humanitarian issues, KAMMI swiftly returned to the political scene in early September of 1998 just after the new academic year began on university campuses. On September 3rd, two busloads of KAMMI's Central Java members appeared outside the gates of a private corporation in Semarang during a state visit by then President B. J. Habibie. Representing KAMMI's Food Crisis Committee, they demanded that Habibie arrest the "rats" belonging to a government agency responsible for the supply of basic necessities (Bulog—Badan Urusan Logistik), who had engaged in corrupt practices resulting in the spoilage, as well as theft and export of huge amounts of rice during a period when the Indonesian nation was suffering from a severe rice shortage (*Media Indonesia*, 3 September 1998).

KAMMI members also demanded at that time, and again in a formal position statement released the following week (KAMMI, 11 September 1999), that the government take concrete steps to lower the prices of basic commodities (*sembako*)¹². Skyrocketing inflation, the scarcity of basic foodstuffs, and the falling value of the rupiah against international currencies had posed serious problems for the government throughout the economic crisis. The inability of vast numbers of common people to meet their daily needs had been one of the most crucial factors in the loss of the New Order regime's legitimacy, and continued to threaten national stability during the reform period.

By the time that Habibie's first 100 days in office had expired in early September, students' initial optimism afforded by a partial return of the people's sovereignty had been tempered by the continuing problems facing the nation. Newspapers almost daily reported on anarchic events such as land seizures conducted by groups of displaced farmers, riotous raids on government industries by disenfranchised peasants, and calls for revolution by radical students. A mysterious spate of killings was also underway in East Java where hundreds of Muslim teachers and black magic practitioners were slain by groups of "ninjas." Habibie's government proved unable to stem the attacks, let alone bring any of the perpetrators to justice.

As students regrouped on college campuses, the assertion that “*reformasi* was not yet finished” was commonly proclaimed. It was clear that much hard work lie ahead for activists working toward the “just and prosperous” nation that had been sought by generations of Indonesians. For most student organizations, the next step in the reform process was to establish a plan that would bring about the formation of a government that would be legitimate in the eyes of the Indonesian people. Nearly all societal groups agreed at this time that the implementation of a democratic general election was the only way to achieve this legitimacy. KAMMI likewise unequivocally pinned its hopes for the nation’s future on the institutionalization of democracy. By embracing democracy, the organization hoped that the numerous social movements, which threatened to plunge the nation into turmoil, could be brought into greater harmony. The problem, however, that became the key issue of the fall of 1998 was: Identifying what body would be entrusted with the crucial responsibility of planning the election that nearly all student groups agreed was imperative.

In congruence with the general consensus that had emerged regarding the limitations of the new president’s mandate, Fahri Hamzah, KAMMI’s chair, voiced the opinion that, since Habibie had become president in an unconstitutional manner, the government should hold an election as soon as possible (*Suara Pembaruan*, 13 September 1998). At this time however the organization was somewhat unclear in its position on the right of the government to plan the election. It ambiguously stated that “the government of B. J. Habibie must definitely have a commitment to prepare a democratic framework (*Reformasi*) in all sectors in this transition” (KAMMI, 11 September 1999). By early November though, KAMMI’s hitherto tacit acceptance of the Habibie administration’s plans to take the lead in planning the reform process was clarified when the organization explicitly called on Habibie’s “transitional” government to “implement an honest and just election as soon as possible” (KAMMI, 2 November 1998). In this way, it clearly identified Habibie’s administration as temporary, yet it accepted the government’s right to organize the general election.

KAMMI’s position diverged from those of several other student groups that completely rejected Habibie’s legitimacy and called for an independent body to be formed, which, representing various soci-

etal groups, would be entrusted with the responsibility of guaranteeing the implementation of a free and fair election. Student groups in this category included Forkot (City Forum), FKSMJ (The Jakarta Student Senate Communication Forum), Famred (The Student Action Forum for Reform and Democracy), Komrad (The Radical Students Committee), Forbes (The United Forum) and HMI-MPO (The Islamic Students Association - Organization Rescue Council). At the same time, KAMMI did not offer blind support for Habibie as was done by several militant right-wing Islamic groups, including the student organization HAMMAS (The Inter-Campus Muslim Student Action Association), which organized militant opposition to the “radical” student groups.

During September, October, and November, student demonstrations were staged almost daily across the country, and, on occasion, mass protests involving thousands of students were planned weeks in advance. One well-publicized demonstration occurred in Jakarta on October 28 in observance of Sumpah Pemuda day, a national holiday commemorating the anniversary of the oath of national unity taken by members of nationalist youth groups in 1928. Approximately 10,000 students and “prominent government critics” converged on the DPR/MPR complex in Jakarta while thousands more staged protests in cities across the nation in order to peacefully reaffirm student’s unity in the struggle for democracy and justice, and to once again demand that the government implement far-reaching reforms (*Jakarta Post*, 29 October 1998, p. 1).

It is notable that during this period a coalition of Muslim organizations including KAMMI conspicuously staged protest rallies on days when the larger student movement was relatively inactive, or at locations separate from the larger general student protests. This was evident in Jakarta on October 29, the day after Sumpah Pemuda day, when HMI and KAMMI staged its own rally at the DPR/MPR complex. In a peaceful action involving 400 students from various universities in the Jakarta metropolitan region, KAMMI members and representatives of several other Muslim student groups voiced virtually the same demands expressed the previous day at the larger student gathering (*Republika*, 30 October 1998).

KAMMI’s Yogyakarta members (Interview, 12 March 1999) explained that the decision to hold demonstrations separate from other student groups was a conscious effort to differentiate the Islamist

student's agenda from that of the more radical student groups dominating the movement in Jakarta. Nearly all student groups across the country, including KAMMI, agreed that: (1) Soeharto must be brought to trial; (2) the military's socio-political role must be ended; and (3) a democratic election must be held as soon as possible. KAMMI and several other Islamic student groups, however, did not agree with demands voiced by more radical student groups that the Special Session of Congress be rejected and a transitional government formed to replace Habibie's administration. From the radical's perspective, the election could not be considered free and fair if it was implemented by the government of Soeharto's protege. KAMMI, on the other hand, saw no other reasonable alternative. They argued that any transitional government formed in the name of "the people" would also have questions of legitimacy and would lead to conflict. They emphasized that their position was not a result of their trust in Habibie—who had been embraced as a national leader by many Islamist groups since his chairmanship of ICMI—but rather because they considered that path the most viable option.

In a statement entitled, "Continuing *Reformasi*" (KAMMI, 11 September 1999), the organization voiced a definite rejection of the "anarchical methods" of socio-political change that were being employed by certain groups. KAMMI argued that, "in a state of anarchy there is no democracy, and in anarchy a democratic general election is not able to be implemented." It furthermore voiced opposition to efforts by any group to form a government without a general election, for the reason that such a move would never produce the kind of legitimacy that was essential for securing the nation's future.

KAMMI's position on the *Special Session of Congress* was outlined by an activist from its Yogyakarta chapter (Interview, 12 March 1999):

We saw that the Special Session constituted a process (for reform). The necessity of forming a process appeared unavoidable. It seemed that the Special Session had to be undertaken in order to guard the implementation of *reformasi*. Even though I do not mean that we supported it totally. I do not mean that we tried to protect it, or opposed those who endeavored to foil it. No way! We saw that the Special Session was a part of the process of reformation...and formed a way for Indonesia to proceed most assuredly in a constitutional manner. (We felt) that a constitutional Special Session would be the most enabling for the occurrence of change in Indonesia. Thus, what we looked at was the product of the Special Session itself. We wanted to see if the Special Session was successful in forging decisions that were able to strengthen the process of reformation or just

the opposite. Therefore, we did not support it; we did not reject it. What was most important for us was the result. If the results of the Special Session supported the process of reform, we would support it, we would receive it, and be in agreement with it. However, if the results of the Special Session were incompatible with the aspirations of the people and the direction of reformation, then we would reject it.

The frustration that KAMMI members identified with the general dichotomy of positions that hardened around the issue of the Special Session was that people were trapped into making one of only two choices: either rejecting or supporting the event. The “radical” students maintained a determined opposition to it, while Habibie’s backers and the forces that they mobilized to stage a massive defense of his leadership provided unquestioning support for the session. KAMMI expressed that the situation was “very damaging for the struggle because our enemy was actually not each other, but rather the policies of the government.”

In an attempt to delineate common ground between Islamist and secular groups, KAMMI worked closely with HMI and students at the University of Indonesia grouped into an organization known as Forum Salemba (Forsal), which was centered around UI’s Salemba campus in Central Jakarta. On November 6, just a week before the Special Session of Congress, the three organizations held several large demonstrations in Jakarta where they issued a set of common demands known as the Salemba Ultimatum (*Kompas*, 7 November 98). KAMMI expressed that the purpose of the demands was to ensure that the government did not use the Special Session to attempt to legitimize the status quo, or to try to take sides in implementing the reform agenda. In front of a crowd of approximately 7000 students at Salemba, the organizations conducted a mock MPR session, through which the groups communicated the four demands that were then “officially” representative of both the Islamist and secular student groups. The demands were: (1) quickly implement a clean, honest and just general election; (2) revoke the military’s socio-political role; (3) revoke *Azas Tunggal*—the statute that requires all societal organizations to adhere to Indonesia’s national ideology (*Pancasila*) as the basis for their existence; and (4) bring Soeharto and his cronies to trial.

The purpose of the announcement was not to abrogate or de-emphasize particular demands expressed by any other student groups,

but to clearly identify that the common ground between students was substantial, and their solidarity strong, in spite of differences of opinion. Rama Pratama, head of UI's Student Senate explained that the political situation was characterized by a "for or against" mentality, and that Forum Salemba had an interest in offering a different discourse (*wacana*), which was not focused upon either the rejection or the acceptance of the entire Special Session. He was quoted as stating, "We support the implementation of the Special Session with the condition that it is in accordance with our demands" (*Kompas*, 7 November 1998).

The *Umat*

As Habibie's administration prepared for the Special Session of the People's Consultative Assembly (Sidang Istimewa MPR), increasingly vociferous students threatened to disrupt the proceedings if the public's aspirations for reform were ignored. In reaction, close supporters of the president formed a new Islamic organization capable of mobilizing large forces to counterbalance the tens of thousands who rejected the government's legitimacy. This organization, the Islamic Community Forum for the Upholders of Justice and the Constitution (Forum Umat Islam untuk Penegak Keadilan dan Konstitusi), or Furkon as it is known, was launched on September 30, 1998 at Jakarta's Istiqlal Grand Mosque under the auspices of the Indonesian Council of Moslem Scholars (MUI—Majelis Ulama Indonesia)—a group long known for its close association with the New Order regime. Marked by the appearance of popular author Emha Ainun Nadjib and other well-known Muslim figures, the event was highly publicized and attracted thousands in a massive show of force in support of Habibie's government. Reports on the actual numbers in attendance, however, varied widely. *Agence France Presse* (30 September 1998) reported that more than 2000 people attended the affair, while *Republika* (1 October 1998) estimated that 25,000 were present.

Furkon's leaders used the event to communicate their position that the transfer of power from Soeharto to Habibie was legal and in accordance with the constitution. They also denounced the actions of students and other reformist groups who sought to replace Habibie's government with a presidium that would be charged with the responsibility of overseeing the election. Since the event was planned to coincide with the anniversary of the infamous aborted coup of

1965 when six top generals were assassinated, allegedly by members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), Furkon also took the opportunity to warn against what they called a resurgence of communist activity in Indonesia. They claimed that clandestine Marxists were infiltrating certain groups in an attempt to destabilize the state. The charge was considered a thinly veiled attempt to demonize the elements of the *reformasi* movement that opposed Habibie, such as the student organization Forkot (see *Ummat*, 12 October 1998).

Such accusations had been made so frequently against any opposition group during Soeharto's tenure that the notion of "rising communism" had become an object of ridicule by journalists and other social observers by late 1998. With socialism on the wane globally and only a very few individuals within Indonesia seriously espousing Marxist ideology, the threat of a communist resurgence was rather insignificant. Still, members of the general public, especially those from rural areas who had limited access to education, could be mobilized for actions against reformist groups through the use of such accusations.

In the days leading up to the Special Session, Furkon leaders and others in Habibie's inner circle recruited an estimated 120,000 young men and boys from rural areas outside of Jakarta, as well as impoverished urban neighborhoods, to help "secure" the capitol. Beginning on November 8th, the Sunday before the Special Session, large convoys of open trucks carrying groups of untrained recruits traversed Jakarta in a massive demonstration of support for the government. The recruits, many of whom were members of Islamic youth groups, wore headbands emblazoned with Arabic script, and some dressed in makeshift Arab garb. Known formally as the "Pam Swakarsa Umat Islam"¹³ (Pasukan Pengamanan Swakarsa Umat Islam), or Self-Initiated Safety Patrol of the Islamic Community, the force was claimed by its leaders to have risen spontaneously out of Indonesia's Islamic community in support of the government's efforts to plan an election. In interviews with reporters from various news agencies however (*Gatra*, 21 November 1998; *SiaR*, 11 November 1998), several Pam Swakarsa members admitted that they were paid a small wage, and were recruited for the purpose of defending their religion from defamation.

As the Special Session began, tens of thousands of students assembled to demonstrate their opposition to the government and com-

municate their demands for reform. Pam Swakarsa members were stationed at strategic points throughout the city, ostensibly to direct traffic and bolster official security forces. In reality, however, wielding rattan clubs and sharpened bamboo sticks, they were mobilized to intimidate students and aggressively attack demonstrators who rejected Habibie's right to implement the Special Session. Their hostile stance resonated unfavorably in many Jakarta neighborhoods however and provoked a harsh response from local inhabitants who resented incursions by outsiders, and were more inclined to back the student's cause. While clashes between the Pam Swakarsa and students resulted in the injuries of scores of students, clashes with bands of Jakarta youth left at least four Pam Swakarsa members dead. After an outpour of public outrage, officials agreed to disarm and withdraw the majority of Pam Swakarsa groups, although not before the eruption of violence cast a dark shadow over the Special Session.

While the violent altercations between students and members of paramilitary organizations supporting the government's cause were distressing, it was the official security force itself that proved once again to be the most deadly force present. As the proceedings drew to a close on November 13, members of the military faced off with thousands of students massing in front of Atma Jaya University less than a kilometer from the congress building. Soldiers equipped with rubber bullets fired into the crowd causing injuries. One observers noted however that officers separate from the ranks of soldiers fired on students with side arms evidently containing live rounds (Interview with American journalist, 17 November 1998). Thirteen people were killed in the attack including eight students.

In the end, right or wrong, the standing government succeeded in completing the Special Session of congress. While the "radical" students failed in their efforts to dislodge Habibie, they at least obtained a measure of success in getting crucial aspects of their reform agenda approved. Among the decisions formalized was a plan to hold a democratic general election the following year, a compromise on the number of seats held by the military in Congress which was reduced from 75 to 38, and a decree to investigate corruption charges against former president Soeharto.

As the Pam Swakarsa was an amalgamation of many groups from various parts of Java, it is clear that several parties should be considered responsible for what the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation

(Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia—YLBHI, 9 November 1998) called the “politics of pitting civilians against one another” (*politik adu domba*). Aside from President Habibie, Furkon leaders Komaruddin Rahmat and Faisal Biki appear to have spearheaded the formation of the Pam Swakarsa under the auspices of MUI, ICMI, and associated Muslim groups based at Jakarta’s Istiqlal Mosque such as KISDI. Adi Sasono, a close advisor of Habibie and founder of the Centre for Information and Development Studies (CIDES)—an ICMI think tank—was said to have played an important role in arguing for public support. While Furkon members comprised the force’s core, Islamic youth groups from various parts of Java were brought in to bolster its ranks and so many regional community leaders were also involved with the strategy.

Military involvement, both formal and informal, was apparent. General Fiesal Tanjung extended support in his formal capacity as State Coordinating Minister for Politic Affairs and Security (Bidang Polkam), while former Major General Kivlan Zein, who had been Chief of Staff of Kostrad under Prabowo, reportedly played a crucial role behind the scenes. Although Zein had been drummed out of the military along with Prabowo in the wake of their admitted involvement in student abductions earlier in the year, he remained influential through his ties with militant Islamic groups. As Crouch (1999) pointed out, while well-known pro-government youth organizations such as Pemuda Pancasila and Pemuda Panca Marga were involved, the utilization of additional groups outside of strict military control was a departure from the norm and infuriated some members of the military. Even though this was the case, Wiranto caved in to pressure from Habibie to accept the formation of the Pam Swakarsa, and he publicly voiced support for the plan even after high-ranking colleagues in the military expressed their disapproval.

While some KAMMI members were close with various Islamic organizations involved in the formation of the Pam Swakarsa, it had long expressed opposition to the use of civil defense forces for the reason that such acts tend to promote divisiveness within society. In the days leading up to Soeharto’s resignation the previous May for example, KAMMI issued a position statement (KAMMI, 20 May 1998) arguing against what they considered to be government attempts to “pit the Islamic Umat against non-Islamic groups which are engaged in the same struggle within the *reformasi* movement.” It asserted that

reformasi was not a problem of religion, but rather a national problem. The organization stressed that the Islamic Umat should never be divided or used for the protection of the status quo, and it unequivocally denounced the use of Islamic religious symbols for the political purpose of protecting the status quo.

For this reason, when the Pam Swakarsa was formed by mainstream elements of the Islamic community, KAMMI was forced into a rather difficult position. While the group agreed that the best course of action was to allow Habibie's government to continue until elections were held the following year, they disagreed sharply with the tactics employed by his supporters. In regards to the use of Islamic symbols by Pam Swakarsa, one of KAMMI's Yogyakarta members explained (Interview, 12 March 1998):

We are not able to say that (Pam Swakarsa) represents the *Umat*... It just represents a small portion of the followers of Islam. Through its use of Islamic symbols, there is the appearance that the whole of the *Umat* is behind Pam Swakarsa, No! There are other attitudes... In Indonesia, the *Umat* is diverse, and there are many whose political aspirations are not sufficiently represented by the Pam Swakarsa. It just constitutes a small group.

In regards to its own use of Islamic symbols at protests rallies, several of KAMMI's Yogyakarta members explained (Interview, 12 March 1998) that because KAMMI has a mass base that is comprised of Muslim students, it should not be surprising that its members dress in Islamic garb, carry Islamic symbols, and conduct Islamic rituals in public. They argued that Islam serves as the central focus of the group, not security as in the case of the Pam Swakarsa. They insisted that the use of Islam symbols by members of groups recruited by the government to support a certain political faction differ greatly from organizations such as KAMMI, which is holistically oriented toward Islam.

Regarding the media's portrayal of KAMMI, one of the organization's Yogyakarta members complained that the use of Islamic symbolism as a form of protest that is associated with KAMMI is actually emphasized more by members of the media rather than by the organization itself (Interview, 12 March 1998). He explained:

In evaluating us, rather than understanding the substance of our organization, (the media) is trapped in seeing only symbols. They see flags, head-coverings, and flowing robes, but they do not understand the essence of our position. Often we are described as fundamentalist... but we will not be trapped in rheto-

ric. Our goal is to serve... If we are labeled fundamentalists, we will not be effective. Thus, as an organization we make serious efforts to show that we are not fundamentalists.

Being labeled “fundamentalist” by members of the Western press had frustrated the leaders of the group for some time. As early as May of 1998 (*Suara Hidayatullah*) the group announced that it intended to organize seminars and discussions with members of the foreign media in order to dispel any false understandings of the KAMMI’s intentions, and eradicate the perception that the organization represented a fundamentalist power.

Conclusion

KAMMI’s insistence on clarifying its message through various forms of media, as well as its active organization of massive demonstrations during this period greatly helped to balance perspectives on the role of Islam in *reformasi*. In particular, its activities diluted the notion put forth by several rightist Muslim organizations that adherence to Islamic values required uncritical allegiance to Habibie’s government. It also helped to balance radicalism within the student movement by insisting upon strategies of protest that are in line with Islamic values. On the whole KAMMI’s stance served to demonstrate the plurality of voices demanding change, and emphasized a point often overlooked by the media: that Muslim student groups indeed played a critical role in achieving reform.

While the group has taken a rather centrist stance on many of the specific issues of the day, it has had to work hard to demarcate any middle ground within the polarized political environment that has characterized the *reformasi* period. Juxtaposed against the extreme positions held by several “radical” student groups who have called for revolution on one end of the spectrum, and a few aggressive Muslim organizations that marshaled militant support for President Habibie’s administration on the other, KAMMI, in national perspective, may be thought of as being located politically near the student movement’s center. At a time when the nation seemed to be divided between those who supported and those who rejected the legitimacy of the Habibie government, KAMMI stood out as a group which applied tenacious pressure for reform, yet for many reasons did not join calls for the government’s immediate dissolution. It is an organization that has strongly asserted its position through large-scale dem-

onstrations and other vigorous forms of student activism, yet its member's reasoned approach to issues, as well as their principled behavior have afforded it a respected reputation within both the conservative religious and the "radical" student camps. KAMMI's protest efforts, as well as other aspects of its social agenda, have helped to carve out a crucial political space for young Muslims who have been dismayed with the current state of national affairs. It has provided a nexus for the expression of Islamist student's societal aspirations, as well as a symbol of their collective will.

Endnotes

1. Reformasi is the Indonesian equivalent of the English word "reformation." As has been noted by Budiman et al (1999, p. ii), it has been used almost ubiquitously in Indonesia since early 1998 to denote citizen's aspirations for social, political, and economic reforms; the social movement pressuring the government to implement change; as well as the efforts undertaken by almost all sectors of society in response to these demands.
2. The Youth Pledge (*Sumpah Pemuda*), first made by nationalist students in Jakarta on October 28, 1928, is remembered as one of the fundamental steps in the development of Indonesia as an independent nation-state.
3. For an analysis of Dewan Dakwah's views, see Liddle, W. (1996).
4. Sofyan Wanandi, a well-known Chinese-Indonesian businessman, and his brother Jusuf Wanandi, chairman of the influential New Order think-tank, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), were closely allied with several Christian generals who held high office earlier in Soeharto's rule. Soon after the pair's criticism of the government's handling of the economic crisis in early 1998, they were dubiously accused of involvement in a mysterious series of bombings that shook Jakarta in 1997, and became the object of harsh demonstrations by members of rightist Islamic groups. Crouch (1999, p. 129) noted that the incidents were viewed as "an effort to undermine the prospects of Habibie's main rival, General Try Sutrisno, being re-appointed as vice-president."
5. Budi Utomo, meaning "High Endeavor," was the name of a study group formed by students in Jakarta that voiced early criticism of Dutch colonization in the Indonesian archipelago.
6. Hamengkubuwono later consented to popular support for his installation as governor of the region replacing KGPA A Paku Alam VIII.
7. Amien Rais is currently the elected chair of Indonesia's People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), the nation's highest legislative body which has the power to elect the president, issue legal decrees, and alter the constitution.
8. Freeport McMoran, operator of one of the world's largest gold mines in Irian Jaya, has been implicated in human rights abuse and corruption scandals by several well-respected academics. See documents concerning the Free Port Controversy stored at <http://net.cs.utexas.edu/users/buyer/fp/sec2.html>.
9. Filipino dictator Ferdinand Marcos was toppled in 1986 by a popular movement known as "people-power" led by opposition leader Carazon Aquino. A massive demonstration held after the assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino (Mrs Aquino's husband), and another in protest of the government's rigging of the presidential election set the stage for the Marcos' overthrow.
10. See Mietzner (1999), p. 186-91.
11. See Freire, P. (1970), p. 33.
12. *Sembako* is an acronym created from the Indonesian phrase "*sembilan bahan pokok*" or "nine basic goods." It includes such commodities as rice, sugar and cooking oil.
13. see Bouchier (1999, p. 157-61) for a discussion of Pam Swakarsa and the use of civilian security forces.

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