

KAMI – A NEW POLITICAL CHANNEL FOR THE DISCONTENTED?

The declaration of *Koalisi Aksi Menyelamatkan Indonesia* or the Coalition of Action to Save Indonesia (KAMI) at the historic *Tugu Proklamasi* (Monument of the Indonesian Independence Proclamation) in Central Jakarta on Aug. 18, 2020 appears to have been a ceremonial effort by a distinguished group of disgruntled, conservative national figures to gather political traction against the Jokowi government and its supporters in the national parliament (DPR). Apparently in frustration over their exclusion from power not only by the current government, but also by the overall direction of Indonesia's 21st century reform movement, the KAMI crowd used the occasion to declare its disappointment with the Jokowi government on the very site where Indonesia declared its independence from colonial rule 75 years ago. This was a clear attempt by KAMI to portray itself as the true manifestation of the spirit of the country's independence struggle, while at the same time stigmatizing the current leadership's alleged betrayal of the nation's core principles.

What Do They Want?

The leaders of KAMI issued eight reform demands (*tuntutan*), implying failure on the government's part to live up to the ideals upon which independent Indonesia was founded:

- To manage the country in accordance with the spirit and values of the state ideology Pancasila as stipulated in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution.
- To seriously tackle Covid-19 and save the Indonesian people from the pandemic.
- To overcome the economic recession that has seriously affected less fortunate Indonesians and those in the low-income brackets as well as UMKM (micro, small and medium enterprises).
- To stop discriminatory law enforcement and criminalization of political opponents and to severely punish corruptors.
- To stop practices of corruption, collusion and nepotism (KKN) and the systemic practices of oligarchy, kleptocracy, political dynasty building and the abuse of power.
- To prevent the rise of communism and separatism and to stop stigmatization of religious groups through the use of issues of intolerance, radicalism and extremism [and to prevent] national disintegration, while simultaneously upholding the country's free-and-active economic and foreign policies.
- To seriously probe political efforts to alter the state ideology, Pancasila, that could subsequently lead to national disintegration.
- To uphold the law and to remain true to the oaths taken prior to assuming office.

Government Critics

It is noteworthy that the list of dignitaries attending the ceremony is virtually a Who's Who of aging figures who have at one time or another held key national positions in official or civil society circles and others whose main qualification seems to be members of elite families.

Among them were former Muhammadiyah chairman Din Syamsuddin; former Indonesian Military (TNI) chief Gen. (ret) Gatot Nurmantyo; Titiek Soeharto, daughter of Indonesia's second president Soeharto; Meutia Hatta, daughter of Mohammad Hatta (co-proclamator of Indonesian Independence in August 1945 and the country's first vice president); Rachmawati Soekarnoputri, daughter of Sukarno (Indonesia's first president and co-proclamator of Indonesian Independence) who is also the sister of Megawati Soekarnoputri, the country's fifth president and chairwoman of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P).

Others included former Speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) and founder of the National Mandate Party (PAN) Amien Rais; former Cabinet ministers Rizal Ramli and MS Kaban; Said Didu, former Secretary of the State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) Ministry; Refly Harun, former BUMN commissioner and constitutional law expert; academician Rocky Gerung; Ahmad Yani, advocate and former legislator at the House of Representatives (DPR); Abdullah Hehamahua, former advisor to the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and Rochmat Wahab, chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Yogyakarta Chapter from 2011 – 2016. The coalition claims to have about 150 well-known figures already committed to their “moral movement” (Gerakan Moral).

Their main purpose seemed to be to call attention to their virtuous loyalty to the true principles of the Indonesian nation and to collectively voice their criticisms against the current government based on their shared concerns about Indonesia's future. They offered no specific policy suggestions.

Strong Support from Muhammadiyah and 212 Movement, but Not NU

While KAMI has no administrative structure or grass roots support yet, the movement may have won the support of the country's second largest Muslim organization, the Muhammadiyah with the presence of its key figures like former Muhammadiyah chairmen, Din Syamsuddin and Amien Rais in attendance. Both still have significant, if not dominant, influence in Muhammadiyah communities and still possess a potentially strong network with other elements in society, particularly within other Muslim communities.

Of all the figures, Din Syamsuddin appears to be the main driver of the movement. Din served as Muhammadiyah chairman from 2005 to 2015. He was also Deputy Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) in 2014-2015 and currently chairs the MUI Advisory Council.

Din has also been active in various international religious forums and served as Chairman of the World Peace Forum (WPF) in 2006, Honorary President of the World Conference on Religions for Peace (WCRP) in 2006, and has been Chairman of the Center for Dialogue and Cooperation among Civilizations (CDCC) since 2007.

Earlier in his career, Din was active in the Golkar party, including serving as Head of Research and Development Department in 1993-1998 and as deputy secretary general during *Reformasi* era in 1998-2000. In 1999, he was appointed deputy Chair of Golkar faction in the MPR.

Besides Din, Amien Rais is another important Muhammadiyah figure who attended the Aug. 18 declaration, although he apparently came as an observer, not a founding member or “declarator”. Once a Muhammadiyah chairman as well, Amien was key in the prolonged students-led protests that contributed to the downfall of Soeharto from presidency in May 1998. He also played a pivotal role in the subsequent reform movement, but failed in attempts to win the presidency when he ran in 1999 and 2004. Disenchanted with both the government and PAN, the political party he co-founded, Amien is thought to be on the verge of founding a new party on his own.

Perhaps more importantly, support for the coalition also came from the Alumni Association of the 212 Movement – whose communities include participants of the Dec. 2, 2016 rally that successfully pressed the government to prosecute and later imprison then Jakarta governor Basuki “Ahok” Tjahaja Purnama for blasphemy. Key figures in the 212 movement, such as Bachtiar Nasir, KH Sobri Lubis and KH Abdul Rasyid Abdullah Syafi'ie were among the KAMI declarators and attendees in the Aug. 18 declaration event.

Apart from Muhammadiyah, a number of ulemas of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) were known declarators of KAMI. They included Rochmat Wahab of Yogyakarta and East Java's KH Agus Solachul Aam Wahib Wahab, a grandson of co-founder of NU, KH. Wahab Chasbullah. Both Rochmat and KH Agus are influential figures in the country's largest Muslim organization, but they cannot be considered as official representatives of NU in the coalition.

Retired Generals

Quite a significant number of retired generals were also registered as declarators of the movement. The most important among them is Gatot Nurmantyo. Gatot, who retired from active duty in 2018, is believed to still have strong influence on both active and retired TNI personnel.

He is reported to have particular influence among active officers who were once his subordinates during his military leadership – particularly when he was the Army chief of staff (July 2014-July 2015) and then the TNI chief (July 2015-December 2017). A number of other retired generals who are registered among KAMI declarators are obvious example of Gatot's strong network among retired TNI generals and members. Gatot launched a brief campaign for the presidential nomination in 2019, but couldn't find any party willing to endorse his candidacy and did not make it to the ballot.

Other retired generals in the coalition included former Navy chief of staff Adm. (ret) Tedjo Edhy Purdijatno, former TNI chief for Sociopolitical Affairs Lt. Gen. (ret) Syarwan Hamid, former chief of the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) Maj. Gen. (ret) Syamsir Siregar and former commander of the Army's Special Forces (Kopassus) Maj. Gen. (ret) Soenarko. As Gatot himself said in a recent media interview, the number of retired generals who are interested in joining but have yet to formally register with KAMI could be higher still.

Other Elements

Other elements in the coalition are figures who are members of a splinter faction of the Sukarno-inspired PDI-P. They include Rachmawati Soekarnoputri, who has consistently been on the opposite side of her elder sister PDI-P chairwoman, Megawati Soekarnoputri, on many issues, and Edwin Henawan Sukowati, son of former PDI (previous name of PDI-P) chairman Sunawar Sukowati, who strongly opposed Megawati's leadership in PDI as a result of an extraordinary party congress in Surabaya, East Java, in 1993 that was an anti-Megawati movement, orchestrated by the Soeharto government.

Megawati was expelled from PDI leadership at a government-sanctioned congress in Medan in 1996, which elected Soerjadi to lead the party. As Megawati insisted on continuing her PDI leadership, the party's headquarters was raided and taken over by Soerjadi's supporters in a violent clash on July 27, 1996. Megawati then established the PDI-P in 1998 while repeatedly challenging Soerjadi's leadership in PDI in the courts.

Megawati's PDI-P contested and won the 1999 indirect general elections when it emerged as the largest party in the DPR. She was elected vice president for the 1999-2004 term, but rose to presidency in 2001 after President Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid was forced out by parliament.

Other KAMI elements also include a number of academicians and representatives of political parties. Besides MS Kaban of the Crescent Star Party; Siti Hediati Hariyadi, popularly known as Titiek Soeharto, is a key figure in the Berkarya Party, which is chaired by her younger brother Hutomo Mandala Putra; Nurhayati Ali Assegaf, deputy chairwoman of the Democratic Party (PD),

and Ahmad Yani of the United Development Party (PPP), were all listed declarators of the movement.

Strong Financial Backing

It is brute reality that any organizations or entities with national political aspirations need to have strong financial backing to survive, let alone prosper in Indonesia's highly competitive political market place.

Titiek Soeharto, the second daughter of Soeharto, is seen by many as one of KAMI's key financial backers. Besides Titiek, Gatot Nurmantyo is also believed to be another significant financial contributor to the movement. Gatot is known to have a few businesses of his own but, more importantly, he also has close links to a number of business tycoons in the country.

What Next?

There now remain questions as to whether the coalition will evolve into political party to formally participate in future elections and try to field its own candidates for the 2024 presidential election.

Din Syamsuddin has suggested that KAMI was formed as a moral movement, out of concern for the country's economy, politics and human rights. In an interview on YouTube channel with Refly Harun, also a declarator of the coalition, Din acknowledged that the movement could not possibly be free from politics. He dismissed, however, speculation that the movement's eventual goal was to oust Jokowi.

With regard to nominating key figures among KAMI declarators as candidates for the 2024 presidential election, he said it would completely depend on whether or not its candidates could win the support of a coalition of political parties that meet the minimum 20 percent election threshold as regulated in the current election law.

KAMI has yet to prove itself as more than a sociopolitical and moral movement. However, as senior economist and former minister Rizal Ramli has said, its structure and intentions will change if the government does not respond constructively to KAMI's demands.

"If unheeded, it would not be a surprise that 'something' will happen," Rizal said in a recent television interview, apparently leaving the general public to guess the meaning of his closing statement.

There is little doubt that among the KAMI sympathizers, there is a strong desire to field a ticket in the 2024 presidential election, with talk of partnering Din Syamsuddin and Titiek Soeharto or Gatot Nurmantyo and Titiek Soeharto.

KAMI, however, has yet to identify any real political platform or objectives. Nor does it have any core strategy or established organizational structure beyond the Council of Declarators. Until it does so, it seems it will just be a head with no body.