
INDONESIAN MUSLIM GROUPS URGE CHINA TO STOP VIOLATING UYGHUR RIGHTS

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Indonesias two largest Muslim organizations called on China on Monday to end human rights violations against the Uyghur minority, in a departure from their previous muted stance.

The call by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) came almost two months after the U.S. ambassador to Indonesia met with leaders of the two powerful groups and urged them to speak out about the mass incarceration of Uyghur Muslims at internment camps in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

The government of China should stop all violations of human rights, especially against the Uyghur community, under whatever pretext, Muhammadiyah, which claims some 30 million members, said in a statement.

China is believed to have locked up an estimated 1.8 million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in internment camps since April 2017 amid a government crackdown on Islamic extremism in Xinjiang.

Beijing denies any allegations of mistreatment of Uyghurs and says the camps provide vocational training. It has refused to allow international observers into the camps.

We urge the government of China to be more open in providing information and access to the international community about its policy on the Uyghur community in Xinjiang, Muhammadiyah said in the statement.

The groups comments followed a U.S. newspaper report last week that Beijing had launched a concerted campaign to convince Indonesias religious authorities and journalists that the internment camps in Xinjiang were a well-meaning effort to provide job training and combat extremism.

Views in Indonesia about the camps had changed after more than a dozen top Indonesian religious leaders visited the so-called re-education facilities, according to the Wall Street Journal report. Donations and other financial support from Beijing had also helped blunt criticism of its treatment of Uyghurs, the report said.

The article linked the silence of Muslim groups on the Uyghur issue to Chinas charm offensive, in which Beijing allegedly courted clerics, politicians and journalists to support its policies in Xinjiang

by offering Chinese government-sponsored trips to the region.

Muhammadiyah, however, questioned the accuracy of the news report without being specific.

NU deputy chairman Robikin Emhas, who was among a group of Indonesian Muslim leaders who visited Xinjiang at the invitation of the Chinese government in February, said there were problems in Beijings treatment of the Uyghurs.

Religious people can only practice their religion privately. In public they cannot practice their religion, Robikin told BenarNews, an RFA-affiliated online news service.

He also said that Muslims consumed non-halal food and could not pray in camps where the Chinese government said they received vocational training to lure them away from extremism.

We appeal for the provision of halal food to be guaranteed, he said. We also [urge Beijing] that [the Uyghurs] be allowed to practice their religion.

Muhammadiyah, in its statement, also urged Indonesia – the worlds most-populous Muslim-majority country – to take a stronger stance on abuses against the Uyghurs.

The government of Indonesia should be more active in its role as a member of the OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference) and a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council to muster diplomacy toward ending human rights violations in Xinjiang and several other countries, it said.

On Friday, NU deputy secretary general Masduki Baidlawi also clarified that his groups stance on the Uyghurs was not linked to any financial incentives.

Read more at: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/indonesia-china-12162019201026.html>

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