

The Annual Failure of ASEAN Meeting for Muslims in Southeast Asia

News:

Indonesian President Joko Widodo has confirmed that safeguarding migrant workers and victims of human trafficking is one of the primary agreements arising from the recently concluded 42nd ASEAN Summit in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia, May 2023. President Jokowi emphasized the crucial concern of leaders for matters directly affecting the people's interests and called upon ASEAN countries to take decisive action against the main culprits. He further stated that ASEAN speaks with a united voice in condemning violations of humanitarian values, and inclusivity is a key principle to uphold ASEAN's credibility.

Regarding the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, President Jokowi expressed Indonesia's readiness to engage in discussions with all stakeholders, including the military junta, for the sake of humanitarian interests. However, he clarified that engagement should not be misunderstood as recognition, and he stressed the importance of ASEAN unity to prevent external forces from dividing the association.

The third area of agreement focuses on strengthening economic cooperation within ASEAN. President Jokowi announced plans to develop an electric car ecosystem, aiming to integrate it into the global supply chain and prioritize downstream industries. Additionally, ASEAN leaders agreed to enhance local currency transactions and promote digital payment connectivity between member countries, aligning with the goal of ASEAN centrality and striving for a stronger and more independent ASEAN.

President Jokowi expressed his satisfaction with the successful and smooth 42nd ASEAN Summit in Labuan Bajo. He reiterated Indonesia's desire to witness a resilient ASEAN that can tackle challenges, adapt to changing dynamics, and maintain its central role in the region. The ultimate aspiration is to make ASEAN the hub of growth and establish a peaceful, stable, and prosperous region, highlighting the strong bond and unity among ASEAN member states. (Source: kemlu.go.id)

Comment:

Since its establishment in 1967, ASEAN has been unable to achieve its goal of creating a fair, safe, and peaceful community in the region, despite holding regular meetings and producing various agreements. ASEAN excels in designing meetings and agreements but falls short in creating positive conditions in Southeast Asia.

This limitation stems from ASEAN's nature as a platform for cooperation and coordination among member states, lacking the authority to enforce policies. Additionally, member states are primarily driven by their own national interests. Although numerous ideal norms have been agreed upon, they are often violated and prove challenging to implement. For instance, ASEAN has been unable to effectively address abuses and authoritarianism, such as the ongoing persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority.

Even with Muslim-majority countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam within ASEAN, these nations have been unable to rally significant action from their counterparts in addressing the issues faced by the Muslim community in Myanmar. Condemnation, providing aid, and accepting refugees have been the extent of their response.

Similarly, Muslim leaders in the Middle East face similar challenges, lacking the ability to independently resolve problems within their region. Instead, they often rely on Western agendas. This can be attributed to their loyalty lying more with secularism than with Islam, resulting in weakened states and leaders with a passive mindset. As long as this persists, the Muslim community will struggle to make a positive contribution to the world, despite being elevated by Allah as the best community.

﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَوْ آمَنَ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ مِنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾

“You are the best community ever raised for humanity—you encourage good, forbid evil, and believe in Allah. Had the People of the Book believed, it would have been better for them. Some of them are faithful, but most are rebellious” [Aali-Imran 3: 110].

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