

of Eid creates huge controversy in Taiwan. An incident in 2013 during the celebration of Eid al-Fitr at Taipei main station is a prominent case.

As Indonesian migrant workers spend most of their time labouring, Eid al-Fitr is a rare occasion when they can enjoy free movement and meet friends. Choosing a suitable place is difficult for Indonesia migrant workers; therefore, Taipei main station seems useful for them as they can take trains from other regions around Taiwan to Taipei main station. However, the influx of over thirty thousand Indonesian workers at Taipei main station on the day of Eid al-Fitr created a huge debate among Taiwanese. A prosecutor who saw the big numbers of Indonesian workers around Taipei main station wrote a post on Facebook, "Taipei main station is full of migrant labours. They have occupied the station and eat, sleep and have a picnic there. If the government does not deal with this situation, it may create a big trouble."⁴⁹ This message was immediately turned into a heated debate on social media and the news. Some agree with the prosecutor's opinion, considering that Indonesian workers should not occupy the station and block entrances for other passengers while others criticise that the prosecutor's message is a form of discrimination, saying that Taiwanese need to be more considerate toward Indonesians.

From my observation, this incident was a watershed moment when the public started paying attention to the presence of Indonesian Muslims in Taiwan regardless of its positivity or negativity. In fact, the Indonesian migrant workers were voiceless in this incident; no voices were heard from Indonesian migrant workers in mainstream media. An Indonesian student who studied a master's programme in Taiwan had followed the situations of Indonesian migrant workers for three years (2009-2011); she indicated that Indonesian migrant workers were powerless and had been marginalized at the lower level of the social hierarchy for a long time.⁵⁰ The features of powerlessness for Indonesian workers in Taiwan include difficulty obtaining halal food, denial of religious obligations (prayers and fasting), heavy workloads, spiritual abuse and restriction of movement.

Perhaps due to the incident in 2013, it seems that Taiwan's society have been more receptive to Indonesian workers in recent years. As learned from the incident of the Eid al-Fitr celebration at Taipei main station, local and central governments have developed the intention to create Muslim-friendly environments for Indonesian Muslims. For example, the Taipei city government has specifically organised events to celebrate Eid for Indonesian migrant workers since 2015. Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) stated that Taiwan is the friendliest country to Muslims and suggested that

⁴⁹ 'Celebration of Eid al-Fitr by Indonesian migrant workers in Taipei main station stir a controversy,' *BBC Chinese*, 12 August, 2013, < http://www.bbc.co.uk/zhongwen/trad/china/2013/08/130812_taiwan_eid> (accessed on 3 December 2017)

⁵⁰ Yuherina Gusman, *The Spiritual Life of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Taiwan (2009-2011)*, Master Thesis, National Central University, 2011, p.4.