DOUBLE ISSUE

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TIME

THE
100
MOST
INFLUENTIAL
PEOPLE

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TIME

THE 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE OF 2018

SINTA NURIYAH

by Mona Eltahawy

During a 2015 suhur—the meal that precedes the dawn-to-dusk fast during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan—at a Catholic church in Central Java that was attended by Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian and Christian members of the community, Sinta Nuriyah likened Indonesia's religious diversity to a garden of flowers: "There are roses, jasmines, orchids and Sita-Ashok. All of those flowers are beautiful. No one can force the roses to become jasmines or the orchids to become Sita-Ashok."

In recent years, hard-line Islamic groups have made it increasingly difficult to tend to that garden. But Ms. Nuriyah, the widow of former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid, is undeterred. The self-identified Muslim feminist has degrees in both Shari'a law and women's studies; she understands how politicized religion is particularly cruel to women and minorities. She has counseled transgender women, supported a Christian former governor of Jakarta who was convicted of blasphemy and more—choosing to support the vulnerable rather than settle into a risk-free life as a former President's widow.

Muslim women are too often spoken for and about in endless arguments by men over our headscarves, or the lack thereof. Ms. Nuriyah is a reminder that our narrative is much more complex and, frankly, more interesting.

Eltahawy is an Egyptian-American journalist and the author of Headscarves and Hymens: Why the Middle East Needs a Sexual Revolution

http://time.com/collection/most-influential-people-2018/5217595/sinta-nuriyah