



MPF NEWS

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Pope Benedict, Islam and Violence

When the Christians of Jerusalem decided to give in to the Muslim army that had been laying siege to the city under the command of Amr bin Al As (RA), they set a condition that Caliph Umar (RA) must come in person, to sign the peace treaty. Umar and his attendant had only one camel and they took turns to ride from Medina to Jerusalem. He approached the city peacefully and by foot, to be cordially received by its Christian guardian, Bishop Saphronious. Umar signed the peace treaty with the rulers of Jerusalem which read, *"This is the protection which the servant of God, Umar, the Ruler of Believers, has granted to the people of Jerusalem. The protection is for their lives and property, their churches and crosses, their sick and healthy and for all their coreligionists. Their churches shall not be used for habitation, nor shall they be demolished, nor shall any injury be done to them. There shall be no compulsion for these people in the matter of religion, nor shall any of them suffer any injury on account of religion. The people of Jerusalem must pay the poll tax like the people of other cities and they must expel the Byzantines and the robbers ..."*

The gates of the city were opened and Umar went to the Temple Mount and said his prayer. Afterwards the Bishop invited him to tour the biggest church of the city. Umar was in the church when the time for the afternoon prayer came. The Bishop offered to let him pray in the church. "No" replied Umar, "If I do so, the Muslims one day might take this as an excuse to take the church from you". So Umar prayed on the steps of the church. He then gave the Bishop a pact that

forbade Muslims from ever praying on the steps of the church. Until today, the keeper of the key to Jerusalem's Church of Holy Sepulchre is in the same Muslim family for generations. The fire-bombing of a church in Gaza in the wake of Muslim protests over Pope Benedict's speech represents an aberration in Christian – Muslim relations in Palestine, one that is spurred by the radicalization of society under a long and brutal military occupation than the teachings of Islam itself.

The portrayal of Islam as a religion that preaches violence and is primarily spread by it is nothing new in western discourse. It is the most potent argument for justifying all manner of prejudicial treatment on the religion and its followers, from soft discriminatory policies to islamophobic writings in the media even to occupation of Muslim lands killing their innocents, destroying their societies and plundering of their resources. This is something that Muslims have learned to accept to live with, especially in the last few years.

But why did the Muslim react in such a manner when Pope Benedict repeated something that we are already accustomed to hearing from not so friendly western public figures? After all flamboyant televangelists like Jerry Falwell have said worse things than the Pope – calling the Prophet of Islam a paedophile and terrorist – yet we never asked for an apology. In the modern era, not least because of the late Pope John Paul II, Muslims have a genuine respect for

Continued on page 3

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E ditorial

Welcome to this 4th issue of MPF NEWS since our inception. We have a potpourri of feature articles, memorandums, letters to the press, reports of MPF activities, MPF in a lighter vein, quotable quotes overhead in our youth programs and pictures to capture our year round activities.

The misinformed and misdirected "war on terror" crusaded by Bush and his Neo-Cons may have been rebuffed in a spectacular and unequivocal fashion by the American electorate. But the echoes of disinformation of the Islamophobic variety continues ad lib. Our two feature articles, "Pope Benedict, Islam & Violence" and "Response to Hate Ideology" deals with the virulent anti-Islam nuances found both in the global and national scenarios.

Though firm in stating that "the Pope started on the wrong footing by reviving the old prejudices against Islam" MPF was conciliatory in extending our hand of love & friendship to the Pope and the People of the Book, "if the Catholic Church needs friends in these lean times, they can find them in the Muslims".

Similarly, in the context of our homeland, one needs to objectively analyse the "clear & present danger". And our (MPF) hope, notwithstanding the differing jurisprudential and philosophical opinions, that we continue to engage in an "attempt to crystallize the authentic and unadulterated Islamic position within the context of the Malaysian law".

Three memorandums were presented to government ministers to address the escalation of efforts by various groupings to undermine the status, role and practice of Islam as the religion of the Federation. This culminated in the PM's directive to cease all forms of public discourse which would provoke religious animosities.

MPF's engagement in the public domain stretched from debunking the allegations of apartheid Malaysia to the tragic fate of the late Dr. Nor Baizura. Eight letters are reproduced for the reader's perusal.

We have eight independent reports in this issue to highlight our annual round of events. They range from the pen of the professional journalist to the amateur MPF unofficial reporters.

Departing from the "serious" nature of our *raison d'etere*, this year's issue introduces the "Lighter Side of MPF". And not to be outshone, the quotable quotes of our MPFflings. The lyrics "se-suap nasi yang ku pinta" to the tune of "seasons in the sun" was sung at the MPF Hi-Tea Fund Raiser for Rumah Solehah.

I hope you have a pleasurable and maybe even tearful read.

by
Dr. Musa Mohd. Nordin
10 November 2006

Islamic NGOs Met Datuk Seri Nazri As Show Of Support On Islamic Family Law (Federal Territories) Act 1984 As Amended

Islamic NGOs made a special visit at 2 pm on February 20, 2005, to YB Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, to reiterate their support on the Islamic Family Law (Federal Territories) Act 1984 as amended.

The coalition comprised of the Muslim Professionals Forum (MPF), Pertubuhan Jama'ah Islah Malaysia (JIM) and Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM).

In their support, the Islamic NGOs made the following recommendations:

1. The amendment provisions are Syariah compliant and should be gazetted and enforced as early as possible.
2. The same should be expeditiously implemented as in the other States, in order to achieve the objective of uniformity of the Islamic Law in Malaysia.
3. Drafting errors need to be duly rectified. Clarity in drafting avoids misinterpretation from any quarters.
4. Every effort must be made to achieve expeditious, prompt and proper implementation of the Syariah Law. Delays and improper handling of cases will only lead to unjustified criticism of the Syariah Law. Justice delayed is justice denied.
5. Appointment of competent judges, who are well versed in both substantive and procedural aspects of the Syariah.
6. Conduct nationwide briefings and workshops to educate Muslim women of their rights under the existing Law and the recent amendments and to emphasise that the proposed amendments do not erode their rights but rather enhance them.
7. Statements on Syariah matters should only be made by parties who are well versed in the sources of the Syariah namely, the Al-Quran, the Hadiths (Authentic Traditions of the Prophet), and Islamic jurisprudence.
8. Non Muslims must acknowledge that Islam is the official religion of Malaysia and therefore respect the sensitivities of Muslims and refrain from making unwarranted comments on Islam.
9. The media should play a responsible role in interfaith understanding and goodwill by publishing only the writings of people who are well versed in the Syariah. This is to ensure correct understanding of Islam at all levels of society.

by
Farah Pang Abdullah
20 February 2006

Continued from page 1 - Pope Benedict, Islam and Violence

the head of the Catholic church. The Crusades, the Reconquista, the Inquisitions were far behind us. The Catholic Church with its long history and tradition, its large number of faithful and the authority of its leadership, its unambiguous moral precepts and its liturgies and rites represent what constitutes Christian orthodoxy to ordinary Muslim eyes, as the last bastion against the inexorable march of secularization of western society. The Pope and the church is seen as embodying the vestiges of sacredness and other worldliness of that society, whose historical trajectory and fortunes is a reminder to us of the dangers of unfettered hubris. This is also an era where few have neither the desire nor the stomach for religious wars. Where the role of religion in society has been radically rolled back, both the Islamic and Christian orthodoxies should be sharing a common vision of restoring spirituality to moderate the rampant individualism, materialism as well as other less edifying aspects of modernity. This is at least the general view point of ordinary Muslims, given the position as the Christian faithful as "People of the Book" and the reverence with which Jesus (AS) is held by Muslims.

Therefore, to Muslim eyes, what the Pope said in his address at his old university about the Prophet and Islam is totally uncharacteristic for someone holding the office of Head of the Catholic Church. That Pope Benedict was the Vatican's foremost theologian before his appointment, for His Holiness to have descended to the language and rhetorics of American televangelists pressed into the service of President Bush's war on terror is a great disappointment and utterly shocking to Muslims.

One can't help comparing him to his predecessor, whom Muslims regarded as someone who had served his faith with utmost sincerity, and at the same time a genuine builder of bridges. At his death Muslim religious leaders praised Pope John Paul as having contributed greatly to his religion and humanity, as a unique example in spreading peace and tolerance among peoples. When the Muslim world felt anguished and humiliated, he stood firmly against the US-led occupation of Iraq and the Israeli separation wall, pointing out that US Middle East policies were not helping the cause of peace.

Not only did Pope Benedict's attack on Islam and the Prophet followed by a half-hearted apology grudgingly given evoked strong reaction in the Muslim world, a number of western commentators took him to task for his low-brow critique of Islam that appeared more like common-place prejudice and questioned his possible motives, juxtaposing his well known position on Turkey with regards to its EU membership bid for greater effect. One notable piece that has been in wide circulation among Muslims was written by the veteran Israeli journalist and peace activist Uri Avneri. Drawing many examples mainly from the Ottoman era and Andalusian golden age to debunk the Pope's thesis, he gave an insightful account of Muslim society's tolerance of Christians and Jews in their midst, some flourishing as scholars while some others rose to the ranks of ministers.

It has to be admitted that wars are part of Islamic history from very early on, but perhaps not more or not less than in the history of other religions that have built civilizations. Wars were simply an instrument of politics for much of the history of human civilization up to the recent era when the massive destruction and colossal loss of lives wrought by modern warfare in World War II made us shudder, and diplomacy and international law became established as the framework for settling the affairs of nations. The battles led by the Prophet at Badr and Uhud was a defence against the idolators of Mecca who mustered a superior force to annihilate the nascent Muslim community. In the classical Islamic period there were many wars fought between Muslim political entities vying from power within the larger body-politics of the Islamic Caliphate – wars that were motivated primarily by worldly ambitions. The biography of Ibn Khaldun tells of his fortunes and reversals as he switched political loyalties from one court to another in the mini kingdoms of North Africa of the 1300's. It was during one of his low periods that he spent 3 years in isolation to write his "History of the Maghreb" whose introductory volume, "the Muqaddimah" became a celebrated text today as a pioneering work in sociology/historiography. In the early Islamic period violent strife stirred up by extremist elements like the Kharijites had been the cause of costly internecine battles that took the lives of some eminent companions of the Prophet (SAW). The war that the first Caliph Abu Bakr (RA) waged on the rejecters of the zakat was perhaps the rare instance where religion rather than realpolitik had been the basis.

It is understandable that in the context of the politics times, the prophet and his companions took part in battles and wars. Even in the era of the primacy of international law, however undesirable and destructive wars are, they may be inevitable and legitimate. Just as "just war" is an accepted concept in international law and diplomacy, jihad in its specific military sense is part of the Islamic lexicon. What Islam laid down should war becomes inevitable is ethical limitations and chivalrous conduct, that the humanity of the adversary must be respected, that non combatants, women, children, the aged and religious leaders must not be harmed and that public buildings, dwellings, crops and water sources must not be destroyed. The books of fiqh of the classical Islamic period would customarily have a chapter on Jihad to remind Muslims of their religious duty to act within the limits.

Needless to say, how Muslim armies conducted themselves throughout Islamic history or what their motives were for going to war may not necessarily accord with what have been laid down in the books of Fiqh anymore than the conduct of crusader Reginald of Chatillon or the Serbian militia's murder and rape of Bosnian Muslims in the name of defending Christendom represent Christian teachings.

Had Pope Benedict questioned why the Muslim armies crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and went on to conquer Spain for Islam or why the Moors pushed north as far as Poitiers and

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3 - Pope Benedict, Islam and Violence

Tours in the French heartland to support his argument, we may have some difficulty in giving a convincing answer, never mind that conquest of Spain gave birth to civilization that became a conduit for Europe's recovery of the Greek intellectual legacy through the works of Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sina and Al Faraby that was to pave the way for the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. But Pope Benedict chose to attribute to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself the violence and the sword to perpetuate the western prejudice on Islam. Thanks to early Muslim scholars for their scrupulousness who have recorded in meticulous detail the prophet's life, his companions and Islam's early history, it is not difficult to respond to misconceptions and deliberate distortions. One such example from Al Tabari is the "Covenant of Umar" the second Caliph of Islam, a document addressed to the people of Jerusalem after the conquest of the city in 638 CE, 5 years after the prophet's death, narrated in the introductory passage above. Not only did Umar (RA) act in a just manner that is a reflection of his deep piety, being one of the Prophet's closest companions, he also exhibited the austere simplicity (zuhd) that was exceptional for the age when conquering emperors would ride in triumphantly with pomp and splendor. The Caliph took turns to ride the one camel he shared with his attendant from Medina to Jerusalem. Al-Tabari also wrote in detail of similar treaties made by the Prophet's companions with the inhabitants of other conquered cities in Syria-Palestine and Egypt. It is clear that the Islamic conquest of Jerusalem and other cities in the region was not to seek conversion of the Christians. It was an imperative of realpolitik of the age and the Muslims sought to put Islamic political order in place of the Byzantines who happened to be Christians.

In Baladhuri's account of the early jihad (Futuh al Buldan – the openings of the nations), there is clear evidence of the importance Muslims attached to the idea of "no compulsion in religion", as demonstrated by a text written by the Prophet to the Christian community of Najran in Southern Arabia guaranteeing them certain social and religious rights under Islamic rule,

"Najran and their followers are entitled to the protection of Allah and to the security of Muhammad the Prophet, the Messenger of Allah, which security shall involve their persons, religion, lands and possession, their camels, messages and images (a reference to crosses and icons) ... No attempt shall be made to turn a bishop, a monk from his office as a monk, nor the sexton of a church from his office"

The other controversial point raised by Pope Benedict commented on the verse "There is no compulsion in religion (2:256)", was the charge that the Prophet was the author of the verse which he later abrogated. He noted that the "experts" say that this was composed early on when "Muhammad was powerless and still under threat" but later he ordered the use of the sword in the service of the faith. Was the Pope implying that the Quran was authored by the Prophet? While this is perfectly understandable for a non-Muslim to hold as a personal opinion, to insist so publicly in such a manner while holding the highest office in the Catholic Church is insensitive and does great damage to good faith between Muslims and Christians.

The decline of religion and religious culture in the west, the catholic countries like Spain, France, Italy and Ireland included, is not about to let up. Known for his doctrinal conservativeness, this must be one of Pope Benedict's major area of concern. In the attempt to conflate Christianity with post-modern, post-Christian west and doing its bidding by recycling the old European myths about Islam and its Prophet – is this a sign of desperation in a struggle against the relentless decline of religion? In the modern European context Islam is not in competition with Christianity. Muslim readily recognize Europe's Christian heritage and its immense contribution to western civilization from art and architecture to the development of academic disciplines and the university, to providing the ethical foundations in liberal thought, even if many have decried religion as an obstacle to human progress. The idea of re-asserting Christian values, culture and identity in highly secular Europe is going to be tough and one can only view it with resigned pessimism. However it is something that many Muslims could identify with if the vision is to leaven secular modernity with a moral and ethical compass that is expansive and accommodative. However the Pope started on the wrong footing by reviving the old prejudices against Islam.

Today it is the Muslims who continue to fiercely hold on to the notion of the Sacred Transcendent, Divine Guidance and Grace through prophethood, of unambiguous immutable moral precepts and values, and of the Sacred Law without having to apologize to secular materialism. If the Catholic Church needs friends in these lean times, they can find them in the Muslims.

by
Dr. Mazeni Alwi
Pope Benedict, Islam and Violence
14 October 2006

Joint Memorandum To The Minister In Prime Minister's Office, Law Portfolio, Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz In Support Of His Statement In Dewan Rakyat On 16 March 2006 That The Islamic Family Law (Federal Territories) (Amendment) Act 2006 Does Not Contradict Hukum Syara' And Showed No Discrimination To Women.

We jointly support the above said statement by Datuk Seri Nazri Abdul Aziz on the above amendments to the above Act. In addition, we would like to jointly recommend the following actions:-

Malaysians must reaffirm Islam as the official religion of Malaysia. Sensitivities of Muslims must be respected and unwarranted comments on Islam avoided.

1. We take pride in Malaysia's multi-racial and multi-religious make-up, the source of our rich cultural heritage. Our harmonious co-existence hinges on mutual respect of different faiths and racial communities.
2. Some Non-Muslims understandably cannot relate to Muslims' reverence of the Islamic sacred texts. The current trend of comments by Non-Muslims on Islamic jurisprudence such as Islamic Family Law (Federal Territories), Amendment Act 2006 has caused concern among Muslims.
3. Offensive and inflammatory criticisms of Islamic sacred texts are unacceptable. We do however; welcome positive dialogue to advance our society's understanding of Islam.

The media should play a responsible role in interfaith understanding and goodwill.

1. Media bias undermines journalistic standards and ethics.
2. Media must acknowledge attempts to correct the distortion and confusion regarding Islam. Printed letters are truncated rendering them ineffective in response.
3. We ask that the media be more responsible, truthful and fair in its reporting because the media is a very powerful agent of influence
4. We urge the media to be sensitive and NOT publish articles that are offensive to Muslims. Dissemination of information through media must be within parameters of professionalism not sensationalism.

Statements on Shariah matters should only be made in full recognition that it is a specialised science with its own specific methodology.

1. Islam is a divinely-revealed religion based on the holy Qur'an which is the literal word of Allah, and the Hadith,

which is the meaning of the word of Allah embodied in the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

2. Islam is absolute submission to Allah. "I hear and I obey" is the obligation of every Muslim to Allah in matters which are definite and have been clearly prescribed in the Quran and Hadith.
3. Islamic jurisprudence is Islamic laws derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. Muslim scholars of Islamic jurisprudence were people of deep learning, piety, exalted character and high integrity. Their authority has been recognised and accepted by generations of scholars and Muslims.
4. Accusations of erosions of fundamental liberties and gender biasness in the interpretation of Islamic law are unfounded.

Appointment of more judges well versed in both substantive and procedural aspects of the Shariah.

1. Shariah Courts perceived as sluggish, uninspiring and of a different status compared to civil courts. The inefficiency of Shariah Courts is caused by the problems of the courts: burdensome caseloads, excessive trials, insufficient court structures and case handling procedures.
2. Shariah Court to be upgraded and allocated more resources:
 - More judges and personnel
 - Ample remuneration
 - More court rooms
 - Increased training for Shariah Court personnel in communication: public relations and language skills

Note: Studies have shown that there is no empirical evidence of discrimination against women in the Shariah system.

by
Dr. Mazeni bin Alwi
20 March 2006

Memorandum Organisation Of Defenders Of Islam

Pertubuhan-Pertubuhan Pembela Islam (PEMBELA)

MEMORANDUM ON APOSTASY IN ISLAM AND CONVERSION TO ISLAM

We, the women of the 72 Muslim NGOs listed below, are deeply disturbed by the recent trend and development on the issues of apostasy and conversion in our country.

We see concerted serial attacks by groups to undermine the status, role and practice of Islam as the religion of the Federation, a religion which in fact has been practised peacefully long before Independence.

To uphold our faith in Islam, we submit this memorandum.

I. LEGAL IMPACT

1. Since Independence 49 years ago, Muslims have lived in religious harmony with other religions. Now certain groups and individuals have exploited the climate of tolerance and are interfering as to how we Muslims should practise our religion.
2. They have used the Civil Courts to denigrate the status of Islam as guaranteed by the Constitution. There are concerted attempts to subject Islam to the Civil State with the single purpose of undermining the Shariah Courts. The interfaith groups and the current Article 11 group are some of the unwarranted attempts to attack Islam in the name of universal human rights.
3. These sustained attacks to test the strength of the Constitution, if allowed to succeed will have far reaching ramifications on the identity of the Malays, the sovereignty of the Malay Rulers as heads of the religion, and the administrative powers of the State Religious Councils.
4. We therefore, urge that the laws on Islam as the religion of the Federation be upheld and strengthened to prevent these vicious attacks.

II. RELIGIOUS ASPECTS

1. Since Islam falls within the jurisdiction of the Malay Rulers and the State Religious Councils, we urge that the laws, procedures and practices on marriage, polygamy, divorce, maintenance, child custody, apostasy, conversion, burials and inheritance be made uniform and clear throughout the country. This is to avoid misconception and controversies on the above issues usually highlighted by the media.
2. Even when the Shariah laws are standardised and strengthened, the Shariah enforcers must have the expertise, communication skills and urgency to effectively implement the Shariah.

3. We reject all attempts by any group to amend existing Civil family laws which contradict the Shariah and all Muslims are to be governed by Islamic Laws in relation to family matters.

III. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Media bias, non- Muslims, Muslim pressure groups with foreign funding relentlessly attack Islam and the Shariah.
2. Issues sensitive to practising Muslims are media highlighted and openly debated and challenged, causing resentment, tension, suspicion, religious polarisation and confusion among multi-religious, multi racial Malaysians.
3. An example of this is when a leading member of a woman pressure group openly described Muslim women in Malaysia as 'second class citizens, held back by discrimination, bound and gagged' and being no different from those who 'suffer apartheid.'
4. This same group on international platform, maligns Islam and alleges that the Shariah is gender biased. Research has shown that there is no empirical evidence to support this claim in Malaysia.
5. All these attacks on Islam have further intensified Islamophobia resulting in non- Muslims perceiving Muslims in a negative light and making the Muslims defensive and apologetic of Islam.
6. As mothers of future generations, we are deeply concerned about the impact it can have on our children's aqidah and akhlaq. The dilution of the Shariah laws and the rising incidence of apostasy will have adverse influence on our children who are already being constantly exposed to western secular capitalist temptations.

We strongly urge the Government to realise the legal, religious and social repercussions of these disturbing trends which can lead to inter-racial and inter-religious unrest. It is imperative that the Government acts immediately to arrest the imminent crescendo that can ultimately explode into open confrontations.

by
Siti Jamilah Sheikh Abdullah
24 July 2006

M Marina's Apartheid Malaysia

Marina Mahathir's recent outbursts likening Muslim women in Malaysia to black South Africans under apartheid is completely ignorant of the reality on the ground. This renders a great disservice to a country praised by many as a model Muslim nation.

Marina has taken advantage of the Islamic Family Law (FT) (Amendments) Act. 2006 debate to regurgitate her tiresome and predictable attacks on the Shariah (Islamic Law) as it pertains to women and family law, and to vent her anger at the relevant government body that has been instrumental in setting the bill in motion. Her prejudiced views and assumptions smacks of ignorance of the objectives and methodology of the Shariah, and a slavish capitulation to western feminism's notions of women's rights, gender equality and sexuality.

An accurate and complete understanding of the IFLA requires much more serious scrutiny than many are seemingly willing to give. Any study of the IFLA must reference the primary sources of Islamic jurisprudence namely the Quran, the Hadiths (the authenticated traditions of His prophet), Ijma (consensus of the Muslim scholars) and Qiyas (analogies). It is completely unacceptable that views on any matter related to Islam be represented by anyone applying only their human opinions and benchmarks.

Mainstream Muslim NGOs upon substantive research of the IFLA Bill, have concluded that it does not violate the principles of the Shariah Laws. The Muslim Professionals Forum (MPF) led a delegation of Muslim NGOs to meet the Minister for Women, Family and Development on Feb 13, 2006, where we reaffirmed our support of her firmness in dealing with the controversies plaguing the IFLA Bill. We nonetheless pointed out a few "grey areas" in the Bill which ought to be improved to ensure that no provisions could be interpreted or misconstrued as being discriminatory to women.

Truth, justice and equality has nothing to do with gender attributes. We must rise above the narrow sexism/feminism dialectics by embracing a theology in which the divine is truly gender neutral. It gifts humanity with a legal code and family norms which are rooted in the understanding that, the sexes are created differently and will naturally gravitate towards roles which affirm rather than suppress their respective genius.

And that Allah has invested both genders with inherent dignity and has made men and women, collectively, His trustees on earth. And the Quran is very clear about the issue of claimed superiority or inferiority of any human.

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (one who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)." (Quran 49:13)

The verse addresses not only Muslims but the whole of mankind, irrespective of their gender, their national or religious backgrounds. It is a universal declaration to all made by the Creator of all. And being a faithful person, servant and worshipper of the One God is at the heart of one's real spirituality and humanness. In this, the essence of gender equality finds its most profound basis.

Muslim women in Malaysia are perfectly comfortable reconciling the injunctions of the Shariah with modern life. We continue to play a prominent role in public life as high ranking civil servants, in academia, the corporate world, even in politics, something that our sisters in more "progressive Muslim" Morocco and Tunisia - countries that among others outlaw polygamy, bans the hijab, sanctions social abortions - can only look with envy.

We would like to reiterate our previous position, shared by other NGOs with popular mainstream support, that after a careful study the IFLA is Shariah compliant. The government's intention of bringing the Islamic Family Law (FT) Act. 1989 in line with that of other states is a positive move towards streamlining of this law in Malaysia, is deserving of support of Muslims and should be commended.

by
Farah Pang Abdullah
Siti Jamilah Sheikh Abdullah
 10 March 2006

Sharizat's Decision An Enlightened One

While Brigitta Wong Fui Lin is entitled to her freedom of expression ("Shahrizat, what's your game plan now?", 22 Feb, "Minister, what's your current stand?" 16 Feb), it needs to be pointed out that her abrasive intrusion into the Islamic Family Law Amendment (IFLA) debate is in extreme bad taste and a blatant affront to Muslim sensitivity.

The IFLA is a religious issue that does not concern non-Muslims. Putting things in perspective, Islam, meaning 'submission' - however awkward such a notion is to secular liberal thinking - is acceptance with a free conscience both the tenets of the faith and outwardly the injunctions of the Shariah which encompass formal ritual worship and the regulating of personal and social mores based on sacred texts. The Islamic family Law is a legal codification of a relevant part of that.

Ms. Wong's savage mauling of the honourable minister, twice within a week, is baffling given the recent media reports that highlighted the support for Shahrizat from organizations representing mainstream Islam, many of whose members are women drawn from various professional backgrounds. After studying the bill in detail, they affirmed that it conforms to the objectives and methodology of the Shariah. It was very unfortunate that the way the bill was initially tabled confused

many quarters, including Muslim women senators, women groups and members of the public.

Being a member of the cabinet charged with a high profile portfolio, making a u-turn on such a major issue makes the minister open to ridicule and abuse. But it was an enlightened one based on good faith and a correct attitude toward such a complex religious and legal issue.

Again, the Islamic Family Law is strictly a Muslim concern. Ms Wong's spiteful comment about "ministers who either practices or have practiced polygamy" is irrelevant to the debate.

Admittedly non-Muslims may be affected when a family member reverts to Islam but there are channels by which such grievances can be addressed.

Ms Wong's letters reflect the distressing trend that non-Muslims are making ill-informed, prejudiced and unwelcome comments on the religion of the majority of people of this country. This is very unhealthy, and dangerously crossing the lines of civilized discourse.

by
E. Lim Abdullah
01 March 2006

MPF-Sensitive Issues Breed Overreaction

The Muslim Professionals Forum (MPF) regrets the public demonstration that disrupted a forum in Penang recently organized by Aliran and the Article 11 Coalition on "The Federal Constitution: Protection for all" as widely reported by the media yesterday. We hope the authorities will investigate the incident and apply the law in a fair and just manner.

We recognize and reaffirm the right of any group or individuals to express their opinions on the above matter in a public forum. However, it must be pointed out that many Muslims see the controversy surrounding the Inter Faith Commission (IFC) and the calls for amendments/repeal of article 121 (1a) as one not of dialogue and cooperation among major religions, but one of provocation and Islamophobia. Hence playing with a highly charged and sensitive issue with the potential for emotive over-reactions and manipulation by irresponsible quarters.

The argument whether our federal constitution is secular or otherwise is an endless game. We reaffirm our confidence that its provisions that enshrines Islam as the religion of the federation while at the same time protecting the religious practices of others is a sound basis for tolerance and respect amongst Malaysians of all faiths.

We reiterate our position that sincere and honest dialogue is sufficient for religious harmony that Malaysians have been enjoying without the need for a body armed with statutory powers like the proposed IFC which Muslims have every reason to be suspicious of.

Although we respect the rights of the organizers to hold such a forum, we question their motive for resurrecting the controversy surrounding the Moorthy and Nyonya Tahir cases. Muslims have learnt some lessons over the former and have accepted with openness the Shariah court's ruling over the latter, demonstrating that such cases can be dealt with justly and objectively by our dual justice system.

It is unfortunate that our present climate of relatively improved openness has been exploited to dwell on sensitive issues that are divisive to society rather than focusing on the more fundamental issues of justice as well as the material and social well being of ordinary Malaysians.

by
Dr. Sheikh Johari Bux bin Sheik Yaacob Bux
20 May 2006

Muslim Professionals Forum Lauds PM's Directive

The Muslim Professionals Forum Berhad (MPF) lauds PM Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's directive that issues of religious sensitivity should not be openly debated in the public arena.

We recognize that freedom of conscience (in the present context, religious freedom) and freedom of expression are among the fundamental rights that characterize a modern democratic society. However we regret that of late the climate of relative openness under the present administration has been abused by certain quarters into a free for all Islam-bashing in the name of championing religious freedom.

From the issue of moral policing, the call for the repeal of article 121 (1A), the case of the late Moorthy, the Islam Family Law Act (Federal Territory) and the latest controversy surrounding the conversion status of Azlina Jelani (Lina Joy), the slant has been overwhelmingly anti-Islam. Among others, this includes the denigration of broadly accepted Islamic teachings, the Sharia, the authority of ulama and religious institution etc. This is overtly evident in the articles, commentaries and readers' letters in the English mainstream presses, news websites and weblogs.

We accept that our religious bureaucracy may lack the understanding, empathy and sophistication in carrying out their duties in a modern, multi-religious society like ours, and controversies such as the case of the late Moorthy be attributed to this. However the denigration of Islam, the Shariah, the beliefs and norms held sacrosanct by mainstream Muslims is deeply insensitive and thrashes all norms of civility in inter-religious discourse.

While we respect the views of a miniscule of Muslims who champion a hyper liberal interpretation of Islam – making Islam subservient to prevailing secular notions of rights, freedoms and gender equality, such views remain a minority within the larger Muslim community, however fashionable they may be. The generous media space accorded to them at

the expense of mainstream views regrettably emboldens non-Muslim commentators and letter writers to transgress the limits of propriety in public discourse to comment on matters that are essentially intra-faith polemics and at times border on unabashed Islamophobia.

Of course the articles and clauses of the Federal Constitution are open to individual interpretations. However the convenient disregard of historical and social context on why Islam is distinguished in Article 3 (1) as "*the* religion of *the* Federation" (while respecting the right of other religions to be practiced in peace and harmony) as well as the reckless insensitivity towards mainstream Muslim sentiments are fomenting an unprecedented rift in our society.

That mainstream Muslims are reacting by holding gatherings at mosques to discuss these issues and the spreading of messages for Muslim solidarity in the face of Islamophobia via the net and SMS as counter-reactions are grave signs that our cherished religious harmony is being undermined by this reckless championing of sensitive issues.

But the degree of injury and insult to mainstream Muslim sentiment must be real enough for Malaysia's eminent and respected Muslim lawyers to form Peguam Pembela Islam and for some 80 Muslim NGOs to form the umbrella group PEMBELA (Organisation of the Defenders of Islam).

This is an unhealthy evolution of our nation. We would urge that all sides need to rein in passions and heed to call of the PM.

Very soon we will be celebrating our nation's birthday again. Perhaps we should take stock of this occasion and reflect on the contemporary scenarios in the spirit of Merdeka and Muhibbah.

by
Dr Mazeni Alwi
04 August 2006

Farewell Dr. Nor Baizura

The medical community is saddened to learn of the passing of Dr Nor Baizura after 15 days in coma in the Intensive Care Unit. The young doctor was only a few months into her housemanship, and coming from a humble background she was her family's hope for a better future.

Unfortunately this is not the first time a government medical personnel died following a road traffic accident while in the course of duty. Many of us in this field can easily recollect similar tragic stories involving individuals that we personally know. Given Malaysia's rate of road traffic accidents, having to make frequent visits to peripheral clinics or sending ill patients to major referral centres in Kuala Lumpur can be very perilous. Then there are young medical officers who contracted tuberculosis in the course of their work. They have to undergo long periods of anti-TB treatment, suffer chronic ill-health and have their plans for postgraduate careers disrupted. This is only going to get worse if the threat of the HIV pandemic becomes real.

The issue of insurance cover and compensation for government medical personnel has been raised each time a tragic incident like this happens. However it is all too easy for

the administrative bureaucracy to give the shrug of indifference as those unfortunate enough to suffer injury, death or chronic ill-health are voiceless junior medical officers and staff nurses.

It is time we recognize that occupational hazards is not the monopoly of blue collar workers who at least have SOCSO, NIOSH and the industrial courts. In striving to upgrade and modernize our public service to become more efficient, caring and friendly, we urge the government to seriously consider providing insurance cover and financial compensation to those at risk of injury and death in the course of serving the public. Post humous words of commendation and passing the hat around simply will not do.

Sincere condolences to the family of Dr Nor Baizura. Al Fatihah.

by
Dr. Mazeni Alwi
26 September 2006

MPF Welcomes Release Of ISA Detainees

On the eve of this festive season, the Muslim Professionals Forum welcomes the news of the release of 7 ISA detainees who are allegedly members of terrorist groups KMM and JI. We congratulate the home minister, also the prime minister of Malaysia for taking this bold albeit late decision. However, we urge the government to go further and release the remaining detainees or charge them in an open court.

The ISA has robbed men like Nik Adli and his colleagues 5 years of their life without their guilt ever been proven, and their young families have been subjected to untold anguish, uncertainties, financial difficulties and even shame which they do not at all deserve. Nothing can ever compensate them.

Except in the most extenuating circumstances (and under strict judicial review) this archaic legislation is against the Islamic principles of justice and the rule of law.

One question that remains in the people's minds on the detention of these alleged terror groups members is whether we

have violated the fundamental rights of a few of our Muslim citizens at the behest of a foreign power in this hyped up war on "Islamic terrorism".

Justice and accountability, and an honest commitment to the upholding of Islam within the limits of Malaysian democracy is the only way to prevent religion from being exploited by marginal individuals with an extremist bent. And within the context of Malaysia this is an insignificant problem that can be easily handled by our security and justice system.

We wish all Muslims Selamat Hari Raya and Happy Deepavali to our Hindu friends.

by
Dr. Mazeni Alwi
20 October 2006

R esponse To “Hate Ideology – A Threat To Unity”

On God’s chosen day, Friday, of His blessed month, Ramadhan, Muslims worldwide would immerse themselves in prayer and contemplation. The men folk would congregate in the mosques to listen to the Friday sermon, perform the obligatory Friday prayers, celebrate the solidarity and fraternity of this one ummah and offer alms to help mitigate the suffering of humanity world over.

It is most unfortunate that some have chosen this choicest of day and month, in her Friday “sermon”, to spew unprovoked insinuations that the bulk of her fellow Muslim Malaysian citizenry are propagators of the “hate ideology” (see Hate ideology a threat to unity, NST page 12, Friday, Oct 20, 2006).

Amongst the luminaries (or is it culprits) of this band wagon of the “ideology of hate and intolerance” and the mobilization to “halt any further democratization and liberalizing of this country” are the likes of;

1. ACCIN (Allied Coordinating Committee of Islamic NGOs), whose roll of members includes JIM, ABIM, Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association (MACMA), Islamic Information & Services (IIS), Research & Information Centre On Islam (RICOI) and many others
2. Defenders of Islam (PEMBELA), a fraternity of at least 80 Islamic NGOs
3. Mothers In Iman (MII), incorrectly labelled Mothers Against Apostasy, which includes ladies in the Muslim Professionals Forum (which she has also selectively singled out) who spearheaded its inception in close collaboration with ladies from the 80 NGOs in PEMBELA.
4. And her hit list continues.

It would seem that virtually all the main players in the Islamic NGO and professional scene are guilty of being agent provocateurs of this “hate ideology” which she furthers adds “poses a clear and present danger (not very original I might add in her choice of cliché) to the Malaysia that we know and love”.

An early morning SMS from a doctor friend sums it succinctly, “The writer is correct about a hate culture – her own hatred and disgust for all those who do not share her views on Islam.”

Our Prime Minister himself has not been spared of her Friday rantings. She alleged that the PM “sent the wrong signal” when he ordered the clampdown on public debate related to issues of religious sensitivities. She disputed the wisdom of the PM’s directive and that the gag order was a sign of weakness, the government kow-towing to the assault of the Islamist (see “MPF lauds PM’s directive”, Aug 04, 2006, www.mpf.org.my)

She coined the term Islamist supremacist to refer to those whose “use of mob intimidation and threat violence worked in

coercing the government” into submission thus restricting the freedom of expression. This is very reminiscent of the adulterous spinning of Islamic terminologies ala President Bush. Moving from “the axis of evil” outdated by 2006, to “Islamist, Islamic radicalism, militant jihadism” deemed too academic and jargony, to his recent favourite “Islamofascist” and more currently referring to the Islamic terrorist enemy as wanting to “establish, extend and spread the Caliphate”. I wonder how the Home Ministry would view her flagrant disregard for the Ministry’s autonomy and independence and their being black mailed in broad daylight by a bunch of Islamist supremacist !

Now she fears for the judiciary which is similarly being threatened by this mob rule of law. The legal chambers has a committee which deliberates on these fragile issues of religion and the law. I understand that a Liberal Muslim grouping, championing gender issues was part of this committee until they were unceremoniously removed because of their dishonouring the rules of engagement decided by the committee.

It makes one wonder who is the one displaying the mob rule culture and undertaking unilateral decisions to project and champion their own version of Islam vis a vis the law.

The sublimity and loftiness of this religious and intellectual discourse has plummeted rock bottom with the multiple name callings and abusive brandings by the writer. But then, she has a comprehensive and exhaustive repertoire of journalistic jargon, among others branding the drafters of the Islamic Family Law Amendments bill as “misogynists” and “patriarchal”.

Despite all this, our religion of peace and compassion, of the mind, body and soul, teaches us, nay commands us to “Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way” (Surah XVI, An-Nahl : 125).

We recognize and respect the views of a miniscule of Muslims who champion a hyper liberal interpretation of Islam – making Islam subservient to prevailing secular notions of rights, freedoms and gender equality. Understandably, they would view some or all of the Shariah rulings as being too restrictive or embarrassing to their western and secular sensibilities. It is most unfortunate that the human rights language has been notoriously abused by a few individuals and groups who are pushing for Malaysian Muslims to jettison their religious traditions and adopt wholly the west’s post modern materialism and secular ideologies.

These differing percepts are anticipated and humanly inevitable. Nonetheless, such views remain a minority within

Continued on page 12

Continued from page 11 - Response To "Hate Ideology – A Threat To Unity"

the larger Muslim community, however fashionable and vociferous they may be with the generous media space accorded to them at the expense of mainstream views. The wisdom being to recognize that these differences and anomalies are strictly and entirely a religious in-house issue, normal to any religious community, and best resolved intra-faithfully.

We however regret that these few Muslims, anxious to be decorated as champions of progressive, Liberal Islam have turned these normal internal differences into national issues by seeking the support of those outside the faith who share the common desire for complete secularisation of society, to force religion and spirituality into the private domain (see MPF Press Release, Policing Morality, March 2005, www.mpf.org.my)

Not withstanding, these differing jurisprudential and philosophical opinions are being solicited by the legal authorities both civil and Shariah, in an attempt to crystallize the authentic and unadulterated Islamic position within the context of the Malaysian law. To disengage unilaterally from this process and undertake a roadshow of vengeance does not augur well for oneself nor one's organization.

The Muslim Professionals Forum recognize and reaffirm the inalienable right of any individual or group to express their opinions in a public forum within the stipulates of the law. We've similarly had our share of "hate mails" and the writer's most recent piece fails to disguise her venomous contempt and hostility of the public space accorded to all others notably towards the "tactical sprouting of new Islamist NGO" for a fertile and healthy discourse. The few isolated incidents of misdemeanours were grossly exaggerated and extrapolated as representative of the mainstream Muslim position.

The writer alludes to democratization as a desired ultimate goal but fails to mention the thousands of massacred Muslim children, women, men, the old and infirmed, conveniently described as collateral damage in Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, , Afghanistan and Chechnya amongst others, killed in the name of DEMOCRACY. Instead, she chose to highlight the one alleged case of death threat. This strangely is not "hate ideology" to her but perhaps an acceptable adverse effect of the roadmap towards the utopia of democracy.

From the very outset, our modus operandi has been one of enlightened discourse, discussions and negotiations within the context of the law, more recently under the auspices of the legal chambers of the country – can one be more legitimate and democratic than this ? (see "Article 11 demonstration in Penang", 19 July 2006, www.mpf.org.my).

The writer quoted Clive Kessler to reinforce her notions of the threat of these "pious new Malay Muslim middle class activists". Unfortunately, we have a rather adverse view of the mentioned authority. It is very difficult to take a "long time commentator on Malaysian politics and Islam" seriously if he is

unable to tell the difference between Islam Liberal and Islam Hadhari (see "Response to Clive Kessler's" article www.mpf.org.my).

Suffice for me to quote a short excerpt from our response; "Those who take the effort of objectively evaluating the papers presented at our (MPF) Liberal Islam seminar will easily recognize Professor Kessler's malicious slander, "... the Muslim Professionals Forum (MPF) held an all-day event to give unbridled rein to such criticism of the Prime Minister's religious orientation and supporters under the banner "Liberal Islam: A Clear and Present Danger". To equate Liberal Islam with Islam Hadhari is most preposterous and highly irresponsible. Suffice for us to highlight one simple fact which escaped Professor Kessler - the keynote address at our seminar was delivered by respected scholar Muhammad Uthman El-Muhammady, distinguished fellow at ISTAC, formerly a fellow at IKIM and the government's most recognizable spokesperson for Islam Hadhari. It is plain obvious that he had not read the conference papers. His is a mere gut reaction based on a blind support for a particular interpretation of Islam which has little acceptance among Muslims".

The writer must be extremely desperate to have to extract a quote from Astora Jabat, ex-columnist *Mingguan Malaysia* to substantiate her writings. His infamous, weird, wayward and unschooled fatwas (edicts) are well known to all and sundry.

We have more than a sprinkling of Islamophobic writers who would like to conjure an image of the "Malaysian Islamist" as some sinister guy with hostile bearded faces, adorning a robe, sporting large weird turbans, no fun guys, who beat their women-folk, hate having non-believers as neighbours and are walking time bombs! The public opinion survey by Dr. Patricia Martinez of Universiti Malaya's Asia-Europe Institute which polled 1,029 randomly-selected Malaysian Muslims across the peninsula between Dec 15 and 18, 2005 would be a rude awakening to their coloured journalistic egos and debunk many of their ill informed suppositions and generalizations.

"... Some of the findings really repudiate some of the claims being made about Muslims, or even what many of us have assumed. For example, the growing orthodoxy, which came through in the survey, does not mean that Peninsular Malaysian Muslims are growing less open to diversity in the country. The results also discredit some of the assumptions and generalisations about Malaysian Muslims..." (The Sun, 6 Sept 2006).

"... As such, claims writ large about who Muslims in Malaysia are and what they want, feel and need, are sometimes exaggerations if not generalisations. The results are mixed, neither confirming only moderation nor indicating overwhelming orthodoxy. But what the survey results do confirm, hearteningly, is that Muslims are able to live with the diversity that is Malaysia, and the reality that is our world". (NST, Opinion: Thumbs up to living in Malaysian diversity, 10 Aug 2006).

Continued on page 13

MPF Raise Concerns Over ISA Arrests

Terrorist acts carried out in pursuit of purportedly religious objectives are despicable crimes, justly deserving the most severe condemnations from all quarters.

Presently at the helm of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), Malaysia has the distinction of having earned the respect of both the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds. Under her charge, the OIC should take the lead in countering terrorism by shadowy Islamic groups.

However, the Muslim Professionals Forum (MPF) would like to assert that the fight against terrorism should not be at the expense of fundamental liberties. Similarly, it should not be at the behest of some western powers whose motives and conduct in the war against terror have been called into question by their own citizens.

The MPF lauds the government's resolve in tackling terrorism. Nevertheless, the recent reports about the arrest of a number of individuals in Sabah under the Internal Security Act (ISA) raise concerns about justice and fairness.

We feel that the existing laws are adequate and those detained should be given the right to a fair trial in an open tribunal.

If need be, a new anti-terrorism bill that does not infringe fundamental liberties could be proposed to deal with this problem.

At a time when KMM and JI detainees have not been charged and their guilt established in an open trial, the recent arrests under the ISA may tarnish further Malaysia's image as a model Muslim nation.

Justice and the rule of law are cardinal Islamic principles that must not be compromised. In some extenuating circumstances such a legislation (with strict judicial review) may have a role, but the ISA as it is applied today on those suspected of terrorism undermines these principles, causing untold suffering, uncertainty and shame on their families.

We urge the authority to charge those detained in an open court and let our justice system deal with the case in an independent and fair manner.

by
Dr. Mazeni Alwi
05 June 2006

Continued from page 12 - Response To "Hate Ideology – A Threat To Unity"

The overwhelming majority in the survey defined themselves primarily as Muslims rather than by their national identity as Malaysians and a resounding 97.1% were comfortable living alongside people of other faiths. This heightened Islamic religiosity should not be interpreted as worrying trends of exclusivism or extremism, as many have elected to erroneously conclude. Instead it is back to basics, back to the holy text and the traditions of the prophet, reflected in the sacred Islamic law (Shariah). The Shariah is the epitome of the Islamic spirit, the very manifestation of the Islamic way of life based on an unqualified submission to the will of God. "For each We have appointed a divine law and a traced out way. Had Allah willed He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which He as given you" (Al-Quran; V:48).

In practice, our co-religionists have always been able to exercise the right to opt for the westernised lifestyle without regard for Shariah "with impunity". We have always respected the lifestyle choices of our fellow Muslims. The least we ask of them is to reciprocate this respect and not to denigrate Islam and the Shariah. (see MPF press release "Shariah enactments tramples civil liberties with impunity? April, 2005)

The undertones and sentiments of her writings "hate ideology a threat to unity" are not only divisive to Muslim unity and solidarity, but also sow the seeds of racial and religious divide by making the non-Muslims feel that they have been deliberately marginalised and maligned by the Muslims. That is the CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER.

by
Dr. Musa Mohd. Nordin
22 October 2006

Ektremis Agama – Jangan Jadikan Saham Politik

Tajuk utama Mingguan Malaysia 22 oktober 06, "Tangani ekstremis agama" yang di petik dari kata-kata menteri Kemajuan Luar Bandar, Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsudin kepada pemberita di Miri adalah amat dikesali.

Ianya seolah-olah menggambarkan bahawa ekstremisme agama adalah suatu gejala besar yang mengancam keharmonian kaum dan menggagalkan projek-projek kerajaan.

Ini bertentangan sekali dengan semangat dan langkah bijaksana Kementerian Dalam Negeri yang telah membebaskan tujuh tahanan ISA tempoh hari.

Memang kita akui bahawa ekstremisme agama adalah suatu gejala yang membahayakan dan harus ditangani dengan tegas dan bijak. Namun didalam konteks Malaysia yang diakui dunia sebagai negara Islam contoh, fenomena ini adalah terlalu kecil dan mudah ditangani oleh pihak yang berwajib.

Menggembar-gemburkannya sehingga menjadi tajuk utama akhbar hanya akan mengundang tohmahan, prasangka dan prejudis terhadap agama Islam. Sekali gus ia mengeruhkan lagi keharmonian masyarakat kita yang berbilang kaum dan agama.

Lebih malang jika ianya diutarakan semata-mata untuk saham politik tanpa adanya sebarang bukti yang kukuh. Adakah kita

ingin dilihat sebagai jaguh dalam "war on terror" dan mendapat pujian dan sanjungan dari barat?

Sesungguhnya, kegagalan projek-projek pembangunan adalah berpunca sebahagian besarnya dari gejala rasuah, ketidak-telusan, campurtangan politik dan kelemahan jentera pentadbiran. Kami mengalu-alukan keperihatinan dan penekanan terhadap hal-hal ini yang menjadi misi utama pentadbiran Perdana Menteri Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Kami berharap akhbar-akhbar Malaysia akan lebih bertanggung jawab dan bersikap lebih bijaksana dalam menyajikan berita dan maklumat kepada rakyat. Kami juga berharap agar anggota-anggota kabinet lebih berhemah dalam memperkatakan isu-isu agama.

Memberi gambaran bahawa ekstremisme agama adalah serius di negara kita akan menjejaskan hubungan antara kaum dan melembabkan aliran modal asing, sekali gus memberi kesan negatif terhadap pertumbuhan ekonomi kita.

by
Dr. Sheik Johari Bux bin Sheik Yaacob Bux
25 October 2006

MPF kumpulkan pendakwah berbahasa Inggeris (Utusan Malaysia)

DISKUSI mengenai agama yang sering diadakan sejak beberapa tahun kebelakangan ini mendorong penubuhan sebuah organisasi yang menggabungkan profesional Islam setahun lalu.

Muslim Professionals Forum (MPF) dianggotai individu yang memiliki kerjaya profesional seperti doktor, jurutera, arkitek, peguam, saintis dan suri rumah yang berupaya menyumbang kepada perkembangan agama Islam di negara ini.

Malah, tunjang utama penubuhan MPF adalah menawarkan sumber informasi dalam bahasa Inggeris kepada lapisan masyarakat yang menggunakan bahasa itu sebagai medium utama dalam komunikasi harian.

Menurut ahli lembaga pengarahnya, Dr. Musa Mohd. Nordin, diskusi awam mengenai Islam kini banyak dipengaruhi oleh peristiwa tragis 11 September 2001 yang kerap kali menyajikan suatu perspektif yang serong terhadap agama Islam dan penganutnya. Ia turut mewarnai persepsi masyarakat apabila timbul perbahasan isu-isu nasional seperti kedudukan Islam di dalam undang-undang negara (Artikel 11), pelaksanaan hukum syariah, hak orang bukan Islam, kes murtad dan seumpamanya...

by
ZUNAIDAH ZAINON
4 Oktober 2006

MPF Visit To Rumah Solehah – Report I

Many thanks, to the 50 or so MPF members and their families who visited us in Rumah Solehah (RS), our home for women and children infected or affected (HIV free but parents have the disease or have died) by HIV/AIDS. Berapa kereta yang datang eh! Macam rombongan nak hantar orang kahwin. There was so much food to go around, even the surau dibelakang the home was feted. The kids had a fun time. We even had an in-house clown FOC; abang katak aka Azman. The kids loved him thru and thru.

Abang Afro aka Afiq dan Bang Long aka Ashaari were the game masters - dia panggil mak dia aunty Zai tau. Aunty Zai bukan main bunyi katak nya - macam katak on heat!!! Nyonya ais krim tu pulak, dah lah slow service nya, budak2 queue sampai kepagar. Ais krim pulak sampai meleleh kata Syifaa'. Walau pun demikian ais krim tetap laku (lain kali bawa loceng sekali !)

Nek Asnah pulak mengalah tak cukup hadiah; amacam mak nenek? Nasib baik abang katak came to the rescue - habis hadiah anaknya di sedekahkan.

Lepas tengok RS; Uncle Jo lagi semangat nak buat Sunset Home; tua2 nanti boleh tolong tengok2 anak2 kecil RS tu. Jo! jangan anak2 RS yang menjaga kita sudah!! Tapi suatu projek yang sungguh mulia. Lets do it man. Saya setuju 100% (Ustaz Maszlee tolong jangan gelak2 tau)

Pasta aunty Azra habis licin - siapa yang kata budak2 tu tak pandai makan pasta ?

Aunty Mils pulak dah jatuh cinta dengan Yusuf (macam Zulaika lah dalam surah Yusuf). Budak tu baru 2 tahun; siap ambil gambar kenangan!

Terima Kasih kpd Tuk Nal for the "underwritten funds" - Tok ni semuanya legal2 belaka. Sampai hari ini si-Mimi tu tak faham abenda under tu? Tak kisah lah dia kata asalkan dapat duit. Nenek Farah ber tin2 biskut disedekahnya; stok cukup sampai hujung tahun tau!

Ada pilot dan medical student pulak tumpang sekaki celebrate birthday di RS. Heh! mana kek tak rasa pun? Towkay green spot takde tapi green spot laku habis.

To Aunty Zam; semoga dapat pahala yang berpanjangan selagi telekung dipakai untuk salat - pandai dia pilih hadiah!

To the Batik Knight - the kids missed the piggy back rides on your kuda kepang lah! You owe them 22 rides tau for every one of the kids; nyanya lah kuda kontot you Manan ...

Terima Kasih Daun Keladi

Ada Masa Datang Lagi

"And Thou gives sustenance to whom Thou please without measure"

by
Dr. Musa Mohd Nordin
08 May 2006

MPF Visit To Rumah Solehah – Report II

The sight and sound that greeted us upon stepping into Rumah Solehah wasn't what we expected. In fact many didn't quite know what to expect but the mood among MPF members was certainly one of excitement as a convoy of cars descended determined to have an enjoyable afternoon.

Boisterous, most definitely. Effervescent even. These kids were like little bubbles, floating all around us, bright, cheerful and full of life. They wanted attention from the moment we walked in, and attention was just what they got. After a brief introduction on Rumah Solehah by its Chairman, Dr Musa Mohd. Nordin, it was off to a group photograph session, and these kids were pros! They posed, smiled, waved, sat in our laps. And they loved every minute of it.

Tea was a chirpy affair as they tucked in heartily, Kentucky Fried Chicken being the most sought after. This was very quickly followed by a round of games ably led by the young of MPF. The children needed no encouragement as they gamely participated, never short on enthusiasm and spirit. These clusters of energy had most of us struggling to keep up as they scurried about. But the 'child' who really stole the show was none other than an MPF member, Azman Sulaiman, whose antics had everyone in peals of laughter. He was clearly the favourite with the children and his rendition of a frog's croak earned him the distinguished title of 'Abang Katak' conferred by none other than the progeny of Rumah Solehah. The scramble for

the ice cream that followed was no match for the two MPF women dishing it out, as they struggled to keep up with the frenzied requests.

It was a little after this that we got to talk to some of the mothers there, who mostly shied away from attention, unlike the little ones. And it was here that we were able to ask for more details of the home and its occupants, on the condition of the children, how do they cope, what happens at school? As someone observed, these children have got many caring adults around them, helping them every inch of their way. Truly, the care givers of these little fighters must not go unmentioned. Their commitment and dedication to this cause is palpable, easily seen through the unmistakable optimism we encountered. Some somber moments as many of us contemplated on what the future held for these children, these little bundles of potential. Some say fate has dealt them a cruel blow, but fate has also brought them lots of love and care.

All too soon it was time to bid farewell as we said our goodbyes. A visit not likely to be forgotten and as we left we knew we'd be back as the memories of these beautiful children of Rumah Solehah are forever etched into the pages of our minds.

by
Azra Banu Mohd. Sidek
08 May 2006

A Day In The Life Of The Prophet

The 9-12 yrs old ones ended on high especially at quiz time. Shows they were paying attention despite the shortcomings. Last minute idea too to give them the notebooks. The actual hall was doubly booked & we were relegated to the ladies prayer section on level 4. A lot of shuttling stuff and chaperoning to toilet and such and BIG thanks to the young volunteers, Ariffin (Aishah's son, he was working up a sweat), Afiq (Zai) and Shazee (Azra) plus the 2 maids who ensured we leave our trails clean.

Some children were restless taking notes 'bersila' and were comfortably making themselves at home 'meniarap' (stretch out). Bro.Yahya introduced himself and asked them to tell his year of birth since he is 29. Quick reply from one of the children, 1976 !! & Yahya was impressed(me too). Some minutes into the talk which was interesting you can see hands up, toilet please!!. Soon they were many more. 5 were allowed at a time. Later Yahya told them that Rasulullah SAW is always truthful and hates those who lied. He gave example that goes ...some of you who want to go to the toilet, but actually you just want to wander around and go for a walk. You will deprive your friends who really had to go since only 5 can go at one time. At that time you can see faces looking down and sideways feeling guilty including my daughter. He then innocently commented, so you see untruth will eventually be uncovered. Yahya's a pro, he knows their tricks what with running a college.

After lunch at quiz time (also unscheduled) the boys and girls were excellent and pretty competitive. They gave creative Islamic names to their group of 10 each and they were both at a tie till the very last. At one time the girls got the upper hand and the boys were booing. Bro. Yahya can't help smiling though he commented that, that is not the way of Rasulullah SAW. The boys finally prevailed with the names of Allah, I saw my nephew finally taking an active role going forward to help his team captain with names of Allah. Later he said he remembered because at ugama school they always sang Allah's names.

Our reward is really seeing the young ones filled with enthusiasm with what they've learnt in that short time while having fun. My son who was reluctant at first said I would go again to Bro.Yahya's class. He was worried when the girls were leading as he thought when Yahya said that there will be a nice surprise later, they might be given Sunway Theme Park tickets or something though he was happy with the Cadbury éclair sweets.

We got more than double the number targeted for workshop 1 alone.

by
Ruhana bt Hashim
03 July 2006

Presentation Of Memo To UMNO

Representatives of the womens' wing of MPF, ABIM and JIM presented a Memorandum on Apostasy in Islam and Conversion in Islam to the President of UMNO and also to YB Dato' Seri Mohd Radzi Tan Sri Sheikh Ahmad, Secretary General of the UMNO Supreme Council, on July 25, 2006 at 10:30 am at Dato' Radzi's office in Putrajaya. Our main intention was to submit the memorandum to UMNO & the Supreme Council, to create awareness in party members on the dangers and repercussions of the current apostasy issue, to get their support, so that they can take immediate effective action.

Led by Puan Siti Jamilah Sheikh Abdullah of MPF, the group explained to Dato' Radzi the background and events that led to the formation of Defenders of Islam, and the great concern of all Muslims on the recent trend and development on the issues of apostasy and conversion in our country.

We also stressed our concern on the concerted serial attacks by groups to undermine the status, role and practice of Islam as the religion of the Federation, a religion which in fact has been practised peacefully long before Independence.

The Memorandum was read out to Dato' Radzi to ensure he fully understood the contents, was aware of the repercussions, legal and religious impact and social implications. We stressed how imperative it is that the Government, especially UMNO,

through his good office as Sec Gen Of UMNO, take the necessary action to uphold and strengthen Islam in our country.

Dato' Radzi listened intently and showed concern and interest. He suggested that we make copies of the memorandum for him to pass to all the members of the Supreme Council, as he was having a meeting with them in the afternoon. He agrees that all the UMNO members need to be informed and be aware of the seriousness of the situation, and to garner their support.

The meeting ended in a positive note. InsyAllah, Dato' Radzi would personally talk to PM and help arrange for us to meet him. 49 copies of the memorandum were immediately duplicated and were distributed to each members of the Supreme Council.

PM's comments on religious sensitivities and the media's role was aired the same night on TV3. Events unfolded later with the directive from the PM to cease debates on issues which would provoke religious disharmony.

by
Zainuriah Abdul Rahman
25 July 2006

The Prophet's Fast

Workshop 1 as expected was a handful. Loud and sometimes bordering on chaotic children. But Aunt Dina managed to get their attention not too long into the session. There were loads of question, seemingly simple to us, but very important to them.

One child commented, she was strict, without being strict. There was one instance where she asked the kids to imagine being at home, in their beds all comfy, & BOOM, she screamed into the mike. Made everyone jump. Imagine a bomb she said. Many kids around the world go through that everyday. Maybe that woke the boy who was gonna die of boredom.

The quiz results showed they were paying attention.

Workshop 2 was a bigger concern to us. These kids are tougher to get through. Yahya wasn't very successful with them the last time. We kept telling Farouk to make it interactive, don't be too serious, joke a little, and when we heard he was going to give them a written quiz, Zai quipped "Dr farouk nak beri exam ke?"

But this workshop is the one that far exceeded our expectations. I dare say that Farouk succeeded where Yahya failed. He managed to engage the kids and kept their attention very well. The lecture part wasn't long and you can tell during Q & A that the kids had loads to ask. Again simple questions but so important to them. And him not being an 'ustaz' was

very popular. One girl said she liked his answers as opposed to her ustazah who makes her feel that everything she does is wrong.

The quiz was a huge hit. The questions ranged in difficulty and some answers were very creative. One answer to where did the prophet receive the first revelation. 'That holy cave'.

We had allocated 5 prizes but there were 5 who scored in the 80s and 2 in the 90s. So the top 2 were awarded cash.

And Farouk got very good response when he asked how would they make this Ramadhan better. Of course the gifts being given out also encouraged them to participate. And MPFlings made quite an impact in this workshop, Syifaa' & Shakeel included.

A mother had SMS-ed while I was still at the mosque to say her son enjoyed the workshop very much & wants more. He especially enjoyed the quiz.

So a big, big thank you to Dina & Farouk. May Allah reward all your hardwork & patience in putting up with all of us in the committee.

by
Azra Banu Mohd. Sidek
18 September 2006

Forum Tajdid Garap Formula Untuk Perkasakan Islam (Utusan Malaysia)

SESUNGGUHNYA Allah akan mengutuskan kepada umat pada awal setiap satu kurun (seratus tahun), orang yang mentajdidkan bagi umat itu agamanya. (Riwayat Abu Daud). Ini merupakan maksud sebuah hadis Rasulullah yang antara lain membawakan pengajaran bahawa tajdid pada agama boleh menjadi satu formula kepada umat Islam untuk kembali perkasa.

Berdasarkan hadis itu, usaha Muslim Professionals Forum Berhad (MPF), sebuah pertubuhan bukan kerajaan (NGO) Islam, menganjurkan forum mengenai tajdid wajar diberi pujian.

Forum bertajuk Gerakan Tajdid: Sejarah Perkembangan dan Cabaran di Era Globalisasi itu dibarisi pakar bedah jantung dan paru-paru, Profesor Madya Dr. Farouk Musa; juruterbang Penerbangan Malaysia (MAS), Kapten Hafiz Firdaus Abdullah; pensyarah Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM), Maszlee Malik; dan pensyarah Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Dr. Mohd. Asri Zainul Abidin.

Bagi memahami istilah tajdid itu, Maszlee berkata, ulama terkenal Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi mendefinisikan tajdid sebagai mengembalikan sesuatu kepada bentuk asalnya sehingga ia

menjadi baru kembali walaupun ia sebenarnya sesuatu yang telah lama.

Maszlee berkata, tajdid bukannya menggantikan Islam dengan ajaran yang baru atau kita tertipu dengan pemahaman Barat yang menganggap reformasi dan tajdid mempunyai erti yang sama.

"Ini kerana reformasi lebih membawa unsur untuk membuang segala yang lama dan menggantikan dengan yang baru. "Malangnya, pemahaman seperti inilah yang melanda segelintir umat Islam. Lalu mereka bertindak untuk merubah, membuang dan merosakkan ajaran Islam atas nama tajdid," katanya.

Menurutnya, tajdid juga disebut dalam al-Quran sebagai islah (pembaikan) dan taghyir (perubahan) yang mestilah difahami sebagai proses perubahan berlandaskan akidah atau iman dalam usaha mengembalikan kefahaman dan amalan Islam yang sebenar dalam kalangan umat...

by
SITI AINIZA KAMSARI
July 2006

Hi Tea To Raise Funds For Rumah Solehah

Rumah Solehah: A Journey Of Hope (BERNAMA)

KUALA LUMPUR, July 20, 2006 (Bernama) - The soothing and melancholic tune of Seasons in the Sun in Malay version named "Di Rumah Solehah, Kini Ada Yang Sayang" sinks every heart, forcing everybody to sit still with tears rolling down their cheeks.

It is indeed such a meaningful song, specially translated to give a perfect view on Rumah Solehah, a place to start a journey in search for a hope in life for some group of people.

The song was presented at a high tea organised by the Muslim Professionals Forum Berhad (MPF) held at the Sime Darby Convention Centre here recently to raise funds for the innocents, the residents of RS. MPF, a non-profit organisation, comprises Muslim professionals who strive to promote Islamic understanding and engage in dialogues on critical issues concerning Islamic beliefs, practices, culture and thoughts.

It conducts public lectures, forums, seminars and networks with all levels of society, local and international. Events such

as the high tea is part of MPF community service. In his speech, MPF Chairman, Dr Mazeni Alwi said Malaysians have been legendary in their magnanimity when it comes to charity involving the less fortunate. "This time we appeal again to this generosity by asking the public's support through a special high tea event to help raise funds for RS," he added.

Looking at some of them who looked so cheerful despite the touching tune of the song, definitely they were blissfully unaware of their condition and future. Fate has dealt them a cruel blow as it was learnt that 21 out of the 33 children are infected with HIV/AIDS. RS Chairman, Dr Musa Mohd Nordin said the Home came into operation in July 1998 under the Patronage of an NGO known as the Islamic Medical Association of Malaysia with the cooperation of STD/AIDS division, Ministry of Health ...

by
Roslisyaty Ramly
20 July 2006

Di Rumah Solehah, kini ada yang sayang

Oh ayah. Oh ibu, Pergi kau tak kembali
Suratan takdirnya, aku kan menyusuli

Oh ayah oh ibu, Peritnya hidup ini
Tangis dan keluh ku, Tak siapa peduli

Sesuai nasi yang kupinta
Seteguk air hilang dahaga
Secebis kasih nak ku rasa
Pembalut hati yang luka
Jasad reput yang derita
Di dunia ku dihina
Silapku entah dimana

Oh ayah. Oh ibu, Pergi kau tak kembali
Suratan takdirnya, aku kan menyusuli

Oh ayah oh ibu, Peritnya hidup ini
Tangis dan keluh ku, Tak siapa peduli

Hidup tidak lama
Ibarat kelopak bunga
Akhirnya akan layu
Yang tinggal hanya debu
Mohon doa dan restu
Jangan diabai adikku
Amanat ayah dan ibu

Oh ayah. Oh ibu, Pergi kau tak kembali
Suratan takdirnya, aku kan menyusuli

Oh ayah oh ibu, Peritnya hidup ini
Tangis dan keluhku, Tak siapa peduli

Dunia hanya sementara
Akhirat juga kekalnya
Apa kejar harta dunia
Tak membawa ke syurga
Terkubur tidak bermakna.
Bakti ikhlas tak terkira
Abadi selamanya

Oh ayah. Oh ibu, Pergi kau tak kembali
Suratan takdirnya, aku kan menyusuli

Oh ayah oh ibu, Peritnya hidup ini
Tangis dan keluh ku, Tak siapa peduli

Detik masa yang berlalu
Ku abadikan saat ini
Duduk ku bersamamu
Bukan menagih simpati
Pahit getir hidup ini
Kita sama rasai
Moga Allah berkati

Oh ayah. Oh ibu, Pergi kau tak kembali
Suratan takdirnya, aku kan menyusuli

Oh ayah oh ibu, Peritnya hidup ini
Tangis dan keluh ku, Tak siapa peduli

Oh ayah oh ibu, Rehatlah dengan tenang
Di Rumah Solehah,
Kini ada yang sayang

THE LIGHTER SIDE OF MPF – To be read in conjunction with Rumah Solehah rendezvous

- a. Sunset Home - community home for old; retired, senile and demented MPFIans !
- b. MPF - Muslim Professionals Forum
- c. Auntie Zai - MPF media consultant & seniwati MPF
- d. Nyonya ais krim – A lady microbiologist, Aussie trained. Now in interior decorating; times are bad now selling ice cream at RS !
- e. Nek Asnah – A Lawyer on optional retirement and loves shopping for gifts for all age groups
- f. Abang Afro & Abang Long - anak2 Auntie Zai
- g. Uncle Jo – An obstetrician & gynaecologist; master mind/pioneer/contractor/estate agent of sunset home (dia actually kata sun SHINE home tapi the young Turk Ustaz & Nenek Farah kata sun SET home lebih appropriate considering the age circumstances!)
- h. Auntie Azra - kena check dulu passport dia; Pakistani atau M'sian atau Singaporean (jangan2 datang nak curi our sand) atau illegal immigrant tapi chef par excellence; with a very sweet tooth tapi masih slim giler2 ... ooops
- i. La! lupa pulak Abang Katak - top gun UEM; married to an orthodontist who treats all our kids bad teeth due to all the sweets from auntie Azra ...oops again
- j. Nenek Farah - head hunter of the Iban variety; make sure you are not on her wrong side ; I learnt it the painful way ...ouch!
- k. Tok Nal - Loyal from Zainal & co - I mean he owns Zainal & co; I mean his name is Zainal; like all others so generous with his legal funds ; I mean no illegal funds; better say no more otherwise he will sue for mengampu i.e. lack of defamation
- l. Auntie Mils - yang hok ni loyar buruk betul who elected herself to be the director of operations; tapi jangan main2 this one only speak in big & mega bucks; hence our fund raising manager
- m. Auntie Zam - hok nie tak berani nak komen tapi hati sungguh pemurah dan generous
- n. Batik Knight - cruises around in a Merc E series but as a knight can only afford a kuda kepang for his war adventures! Amacam brader?
- o. Mimi - anyone has the "idiot's guide to law" for her reading?
- p. Maszlee - our young giggly Ustaz aka padaman (apprentice of the Jedi) who cannot stop laughing at all the senile; demented antics of MPFIans
- q. Taukeh green spot - Datuk MPF yang pastikam semua are well hydrated in all our ventures; with Green Spot; satu hari nanti jadi incredible hulk - the green man!
- r. Tok Penghulu - of course "the Jedi" himself ... kata Nenek Farah - the man who fell from grace to his dark side...kwang; kwang; kwang
- s. Yang tak sebut tu sorry lah - this little Jedi aka Syifaa' says .. times up

MPF – QUOTABLE QUOTES :

1. Auntie! get these boys off my butt - group leader Workshop 1 (WS1) whose team mates were harassing him for not winning the quiz
2. Can we just taste a bit of the cream from the cake during fasting? - girl WS 1
3. I promise to play less video games during Ramadhan - Shakeel
4. I will try to fight my nafsu to eat during Ramadhan - WS 2 (Dr. Farouk commented ; boy you really have a passion for eating)
5. Rinsing the mouth is allowed during Ramadhan ... but not with soya bean - Cleaning ladies chipped in WS 2
6. We fast in Ramadhan so that we will get thinner - boy WS 1
7. One boy said he would die of boredom during WS 1 and pretended to sleep , suddenly he was asking the most questions - the Dina magic!
8. Parent SMS saying her kid enjoyed the WS and would like to attend more
9. Another parent said MPF must do it quarterly!
10. Girl WS 1 tanya bila WS 3; ada ke?

MPF – Public Events

MPF Hi-Tea Fund Raising for Rumah Solehah
Chairperson Zainal with Yahya Adel our guest speaker from Australia



Azman aka "Abang Katak" having fun with the kids



MPF ladies at their regular "makans"



MPF ladies breaking their Ramadhan Fast



More fun with the kids of Rumah Solehah



MPF families with children of Rumah Solehah



MPF ladies at the Breaking of Fast



Visiting the family of the late Moorthy through the good offices of Hindu Sangam



MPF chairman presenting a souvenir to Dina