O GOD: YOU are Peace, YOU are the source of Peace, Peace belongs to YOU. So welcome us (in the Hereafter) O LORD with the salutation of ‘Peace!’; and admit us into Paradise the Abode of Peace. Blessed and Exalted are YOU our LORD, Possessor of Majesty and Reverence. (Text from al-Tirmidhi and al-Nasa‘i)

DEMOCRATISATION IN MYANMAR

Opportunities & Challenges For Its Muslim Community

IAIS Malaysia organised an International Seminar on Islam in Myanmar on 29 April 2012 jointly with the Myanmar Muslim Intellectual Forum (MMIF) and a few others. The Keynote Address was delivered by YABhg Tun Hj Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, former Prime Minister of Malaysia and Patron of IAIS. The seminar addressed pertinent issues relating to education, socio-economic challenges, youth and the future of Islam in Myanmar.

(Read more p. 3)

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EDITOR’S NOTE
Welcome to our 7th bulletin. The focus in this issue is on the Keynote Address by Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi delivered at an International Conference on “Democratisation in Myanmar” and a report on the Conference by Tengku Ahmad Hazri. This issue also features Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali’s article, “Moderation (Wasatiyyah) in Jihad” and excerpts he has compiled from Malik Bennabbi’s The Quranic Phenomenon. The excerpts are presented under the title “Religion and Civilisation.”

MODERATION (WASATIYYAH) IN JIHAD
by Mohammad Hashim Kamali

A study of the Qur’an reveals that the Meccan suras do not contain any directive on jihad for the simple reason that in Mecca the Muslims did not have their own government! According to a hadith:

A Muslim ruler is the shield (of his people) that can only be waged under him and people should seek his shelter [in war].

The military meaning of jihad, which has unfortunately dominated all its other meanings, has in course of time departed from a balanced understanding of this important principle of Islam. The departure in question is reflective of the historical patterns of events that eventually also affected juristic thinking of some schools and scholars. Islamic law provides a clear set of rules that regulate military engagement, which have not, however, been consistently followed. Unlike the Romans, for example, who subscribed to the notion that silent enim leges enter arma (laws are silent during wars), the Prophet of Islam issued strict instructions to warriors prohibiting them from harming women and children, the aged, monks and priests, the blind and the insane, all brutality and maiming. Destruction of livestock, trees and crops is also forbidden unless it be with a purpose to sustain life. Of utmost importance is the Qur’anic injunction that innocent human life must not be destroyed in any warfare: “Whosoever kills a human being for other than just cause is as though he had killed all humanity.” (al-Ma‘idah, 5:32).

The Qur’an refers to jihad in 24 verses. Cherif Bazouze has reviewed them and observed that most of the verses emphasise the more spiritual and non-violent aspects of jihad, such as being steadfast in the faith and sacrificing for the faith, protection of Mecca to Madinah, and peaceful propagation of the faith. Jihad as armed resistance against the enemies of Islam is also referred to in a few verses. The verses in Madinah were less conciliatory because that was a critical time in the early days of Islam which could have easily been defeated by its enemies. During the Meccan period, Muslims were persecuted by the idolaters of Mecca that eventually forced them to migrate and leave behind tribal and family ties, work, house and fortune. The distinctive characteristic of armed jihad at the Prophet’s time was self-defence. This was particularly evident in the battles of Badr (624 CE) and Uhud (625 CE), where the Muslims were attacked by the superior forces, as well as in other battles. The Qur’anic verse was thus revealed: “Fight in the way of God those who fight against you, but begin not by the first blows. Verily God loves not aggressors.” (al-Baqarah, 2:190) and provided the scriptural basis and the principle for judging the legitimacy of jihad.

When a legitimate jihad is waged, it must not be based on anger and hatred. The Qur’an thus warns Muslims: “Let not hatred of a people cause you to be unjust. You must do justice.” (al-Ma‘idah, 5:8). Grievance can turn to anger and hatred, but that cannot be the basis of blind revenge. Even the enemy contd. on page 6

I would like to congratulate IAIS Malaysia and Myanmar Muslim Intellectual Forum and their partners for co-organising this International Seminar on Islam in Myanmar on the theme “Democratisation in Myanmar: Opportunities and Challenges for its Muslim Community.” It is a welcome seminar, since to my knowledge this is the first seminar on Islam in Myanmar in this country to be held on such a large scale as this one. I am happy to note that we have speakers from Myanmar itself to enlighten us about the conditions of the Muslim community in the country.

I understand that prior to this seminar IAIS Malaysia and Myanmar Muslim Intellectual Forum have already collaborated in January this year in organising a roundtable discussion on the Muslim community in Myanmar. I commend their collective efforts. In particular, I commend IAIS Malaysia for taking the initiative to collaborate with Myanmar Muslims in this country as well as in Myanmar not only for their benefits but also the benefits of Myanmar and the larger ASEAN Community.

Since IAIS Malaysia is an international think-tank concerned basically with Muslim issues it is a good thing for them to organise discussions, and undertake research on issues affecting Muslim minorities particularly in the ASEAN region. As we all know, ASEAN will become a regional community in 2015. As the largest religious group in the ASEAN community, Muslims have a moral responsibility to help develop and achieve peace and security in the region. The different Muslim communities in ASEAN, both majority and minority, should therefore work closely together to position themselves as effective partners with the other communities in achieving the goals of the ASEAN community.

I hope the Muslim community in Myanmar will play an active role in this new regional community and not isolate themselves. I see the active participation of Myanmar Muslims in this seminar as a clear and good sign that they want their community and their country to work together with the rest of ASEAN in the pursuit of development and peace.

I take note of the important fact that, demographically speaking, the Muslim community in Myanmar constitutes perhaps the largest national Muslim minority in ASEAN. Given freedom and better opportunities in education and economic life in their country there is a great possibility that they will catch up with the other Muslim minorities in the region and even perhaps surpass their achievements. In their past history, Myanmar Muslims were known to have made many contributions to the development of their country in various sectors of public life. On the basis of the topics discussed in this seminar, I venture to say that the present generation of Myanmar Muslims too is harboring the hope that they will be given the opportunity to play their rightful role in Myanmar society.

It is a commendable thing for them to give priorities to issues of education, economic life, and youth development. These are the most important societal issues that will benefit the present and future generations of the Muslim community. My advice to all Muslim minority communities in ASEAN, and not just the Myanmar Muslims, is to invest their resources in education and youth development for the sake of a better future for their respective communities. Muslim communities should seek to empower themselves through education and the pursuit of knowledge relevant to their needs in the 21st century. In this area of education, the more developed Muslim communities can help the less developed and less fortunate ones. In trying to secure their rights in society, Muslim minorities should adopt peaceful means and work in tandem with the non-Muslim communities and not resort to violence.

Myanmar Muslims now working in other ASEAN countries, including Malaysia, can also help to advance the cause of education in their community at home. In Malaysia,
some of the Myanmar Muslims living here are successful professionals and businessmen. They are therefore in a position to help their brethren at home, both materially and morally, in the advancement of their education. I hope this seminar will be able to take a closer look at how the Myanmar Muslims in this country can extend their help in the field of education to their community at home.

It is completely understandable that Myanmar Muslims are now taking stock of their current situation, both of their fortunes and misfortunes. Politically, Myanmar is now at a new juncture of their history. There is the wide perception that Myanmar is now moving in the direction of liberalisation and democratisation. It is only appropriate and proper that leaders and intellectuals of the Myanmar Muslim community take initiatives to promote discourses among them on issues and challenges generated by the new political realities in the country.

My advice to the Muslim community wherever they may be is that they should adopt intelligent, wise, and peaceful responses to the changes taking place in their country. Practical measures based on knowledge and wisdom are the best of all. My prayers are with them at this particular juncture of their history with the sincere hope that they will have a much better future in years to come, insha'Allah.

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful, I declare the International Seminar on Islam in Myanmar: Opportunities and Challenges for its Muslim Community open.

In any new political situation there would always be opportunities and challenges that ought to be addressed and well thought out, especially by the intellectuals of the community.

My advice to the Muslim community wherever they may be is that they should adopt intelligent, wise, and peaceful responses to the changes taking place in their country. Practical measures based on knowledge and wisdom are the best of all. My prayers are with them at this particular juncture of their history with the sincere hope that they will have a much better future in years to come, insha'Allah.

Seminar Report
Islam in Myanmar: Democratisation in Myanmar
by Tengku Ahmad Hazi

The International Seminar on Islam in Myanmar with the theme, “Democratisation in Myanmar: Opportunities & Challenges for its Muslim Community”, was co-organised with the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) East Asia, Regional Islamic Da’wah Council of Southeast Asia and The Pacific (RISEAP) and the Institute for the Study of the Ummah and Global Understanding (ISUGU). The speakers were Dr Maung Maung @ Haji Mohammed Hauein (on the “Education of Muslim Muslims in the Age of Globalisation”), Soe Myint Than (“Economic, Social and Welfare Position of Myanmar Muslims”) and Muslana Akbar Shah @ U Tin Aung (“The Future of Muslim Youths in Myanmar”) from Myanmar, and Ambassador Dato’ Mat Amir Jaafar from the Asia-Europe Institute, University of Malaya.

Most of the speakers began by addressing the current plight of Myanmar Muslims, highlighting particularly the challenges and opportunities towards democratisation, with strong focus on education. Generally speaking, the educational infrastructures and facilities remain rudimentary: while a few recommendations emerged from the deliberations. An example is the proposal for the establishment of a Muslim Affairs Ministry or Department, a practice which has precedence in other countries in the region like Singapore and Thailand. Other suggestions: changing mindset initiatives for economic improvements, e.g. fresh water harvesting and multi-functional farming system.

In any new political situation there would always be opportunities and challenges that ought to be addressed and well thought out, especially by the intellectuals of the community.

My advice to the Muslim community wherever they may be is that they should adopt intelligent, wise, and peaceful responses to the changes taking place in their country. Practical measures based on knowledge and wisdom are the best of all. My prayers are with them at this particular juncture of their history with the sincere hope that they will have a much better future in years to come, insha'Allah.

Hikmah

It is enough of a sin for a man to relate all of what he hears. - Hadith

The best of the people is the one who is of greatest benefit to them. - Hadith

Your reason and your passion are the rudder and the sails of your seafaring soul. If either your sails or your rudder be broken, you can but toss and drift, or else be held at a standstill in mid-seas. - Words of Wisdom from The Prophet by Khalil Gibran

The sweetness of life lies in dispensing with formalities. - ‘Ali bin Abi Taib

Without internal forms of solidarity and mutual trust, the market cannot completely fulfill its proper economic function. - Pope Benedict XVI
should be treated with justice. One should “repel the evil deed with one that is better, then vitriol he, between whom there was enmity (will become) as though he were a protective friend” (al-Fusilat, 41:34).

Early Sunni doctrine also maintained that military jihad, even when it is waged under a lawful rule, was for self-defence and permissible only in face of aggression.7 In the Twelver Imami Shi’ite doctrine, “all the eminent authorities have asserted that jihad, except for defence, is forbidden in the absence of the munder, that is the ‘inert man’.”8

In her article on “The Revolt of Islam,” Nikkie Kiddie, an American Professor of Middle Eastern History, explains the rise of militancy among Muslims. She notes that with the curious exception of Wahhabism, militant jihad movements in the modern era began and grew mostly as a response to western colonialism. The earliest ones in the eighteenth century in Sumatra and West Africa emerged in the face of “destructive economic change influenced by the West.” In the nineteenth century, broader waves of jihad movements cropped up in Algeria, Sudan, the Caucasus, and Libya as “a direct response to French, British, Russian and Italian colonial conquest.”9

Western media has become wont to associating war and violence with Islam. The truth, however, is otherwise. It would indeed be difficult to argue that the history of the Christian West has been more peaceful than that of the Muslim world. The number of wars, instances of religious persecution, and forced conversions waged by Christian governments and armies, as well as their Muslim counterparts are legion. But “western historians have shown that on the whole the record of Muslims compares very favourably with that of Christians in this regard. In particular, state-sponsored persecution or forced conversion of non-Muslims was quite rare in the Islamic world.”10

Mahmud Shalut, the Shaykh of al- Azhar from 1958 to 1963, lends considerable weight to the argument that the Qur’an only allows warfare to be waged in self-defence, and he quotes verses from the Qur’an, including 8:61 and 60:8-9, which together with 2:190 and 22:39-40, uphold that principle.11 Another Shaykh of al- Azhar, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, issued a fatwa in 2001 to condone the hostage taking in the Philippines: “Islam rejects all forms of violence. These acts of violence have nothing to do with Islam.”12 He also condemned the terrorist act of September 11, 2001 in America.13 The Chief Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al- Ashaya also declared in 2004: “You must know Islam’s firm position against all these terrible crimes. The world must know that Islam is a religion of peace...justice and guidance...Islam forbids the high-jacking of airplanes, ships and other means of transport, and it forbids all acts that undermine the security of the innocent.”14

Islamic law proscribes use and deployment of certain types of cruel weapons, which is why many modern Muslim thinkers, including the present writer, regard manufacture and use of weapons of mass destruction to be unlawful and contrary to mankind’s mission as God’s vicegerents and custodians of the earth.15 Seyyed Hossein Nasr has similarly observed: “Those who carry our terrorism in the West or elsewhere in the name of jihad are violating an originally sacred term, and their efforts have not been accepted by established and mainstream religious authorities as jihad.”16 Vigilance against the widespread misuse of jihad is thus strongly recommended.

There is a great deal of misinformation on jihad mainstream media originating from western sources and among Muslims themselves. A major, corrective and forceful campaign by Muslim thought leaders, politicians and religious leaders is therefore necessary to curb the tide of misinformation and widespread misunderstanding of jihad.

Notes
2. Bakhtari, Safari al-Bakhtari, Hadith no. 2957.
4. Ibid., 22.
6. Ibid., 262.


FROM AS far back as one can go into human history, from the most primitive stages of social development to the most advanced periods of civilisation, one always finds a trace of religious thought. Archaeology has always revealed, among the vestiges which it brings to light, the remnants of monuments which were consecrated to religious evocations by the ancients, whatever those devotions might have been.

From the simple dolmen to the most imposing temple, architecture has evolved in tandem with religious thought, including the laws as well as the sciences of man. In fact, civilisation was born in the shade of temples, such as Solomon’s and the Ka’bah. From there it radiated to illuminate the world, shining on its universities and laboratories and enlightening in particular political debates in its parliaments. The laws of modern nations are canonical in essence. As for the so-called civil laws, they are of no less religious essence, as is the case with the French civil code which was in fact borrowed from Islamic jurisprudence.

Peoples’ customs and habits are moulded by a metaphysical preoccupation that inclines even the smallest Negro village to gather around a hut, deliberately and carefully built as a meeting place for spiritual devotions varying in their primitiveness. Totemism, mythologies and theologies are but expressions of this preoccupation which haunts human consciousness as it is seized by the enigma and mysterious nature of things and their ultimate end and purpose. Everything thinking mind is preoccupied with the same question, which is expressed in this passage of a Vedic hymn:

Who really knows? Who will here proclaim it? Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation? The Gods came afterwards, with the fashioning of this universe. To whom has it arisen? To whom was this universe imparted? Whence this creation has arisen—perhaps it formed itself, thus being misguided by a scientism that is most probably oblivious to the elementary phenomenon. It would indeed be naive to try to resolve this philosophical antagonism by a mathematical solution, as some of our intellectuals would like to do, thus being misguided by a scientism that is most probably oblivious to the elementary phenomenon. That human consciousness has thus faced, throughout all the phases of its development, the metaphysical problem with such regularity is itself an issue which sociologists wished to resolve by characterising man as “a fundamentally religious animal.” Two divergent theoretical consequences have followed from this basically objective definition:

1. Is man a ‘religious animal’ or homo religious in an innate fashion, by virtue of an original disposition of his nature or?
2. Has he acquired this quality through some sort of psychic osmosis spread to all of humanity, from an initial cultural accident that had occurred among a specific human group?

These are precisely the two main conflicting theses arising out of the problem posed by the existence of the religious phenomenon. It would indeed be naive to try to resolve this philosophical antagonism by a mathematical solution, as some of our intellectuals would like to do, thus being misguided by a scientism that is most probably oblivious to the elementary principles of positive science itself. Nevertheless, one should not ignore the fact that even Euclidean geometry, the most rigorous of all the sciences, rests only on a postulate and not on a demonstrative mathematical proof. This is also true of all other geometrical systems constructed since Euclid. Be that as it may, once its fundamental principle is established, a system must remain rigorously consistent with that principle, coherent in all its consequences.

Emanating as they are from the existence of the religious phenomenon, the two questions just raised do not exist. Hence, science cannot prove the non-existence of God, neither can it—and materialism, between the religion which has God as a basis and that which postulates matter as an absolute. Emanating as they are from the existence of the religious phenomenon, the two questions just raised do not exist.
Inquiry is the backbone of learning. In this regard, the Imam says:

"I enjoin and prompt to seeking knowledge. He who does not learn with humility for an hour will remain in humiliation of ignorance forever." (Chap. 2, p. 53—54)

On the relationship of the pupil to scholar the Imam writes:

Know that the knowledge-seeker in his learning stage should possess adulation and humility: if he uses the latter two he will obtain it, and if he abandons the two he will be bereaved; this is because his adulation of the knowledgeable manifests his firm grasp of knowledge, his humility is the reason for his perpetuation of patience, disclosing his grasp is a gain, and perpetuating in patience brings augmentation. Mu’adh Ibn Jahal narrated the Prophet ﷺ saying: "It is not the characteristics of the faithful to flatter except in seeking knowledge." (Chap. 2, p. 56)

Inquiry is the backbone of learning. In this regard, the Imam says:

"When inquiry is frowned upon, on this the Imam writes:

And he prohibited idle question and rebuked it. The Prophet ﷺ said: "I prohibit you from idle talk, asking too many questions, and wasting of wealth." And he ﷺ said: "Beware of excessive questions, for those before you perished because of asking too many questions." This prohibition is not contrary to the encouragement of inquiry above. The Prophet ﷺ commanded to inquire those who intend to know what they do not know, and prohibited from excessive questions those who resent what they hear in the response … (Chap. 2, p. 56)

RELIGION AND CIVILISATION

cont'd from page 7

The first regards the religious sense of man as an original part of his nature—a fact which is recognised in many respects as an essential factor in all civilisations. The second treat religion as a mere historical accident of human culture.

The comparison of the two systems—one essentially physical, for which everything is determined by matter, and the other metaphysical, since it considers that matter itself is determined—can only be conclusive when one takes into consideration their similar and comparable components.

We should not lose sight of the fact that there is no question here of a comparison between two sciences, but a comparison between two credos: the credo that deifies matter and that which makes God intervene. It is perhaps not superfluous to say that a great scholar can be a perfectly true believer, while a miserable, ignorant man can be a real atheist—such as has often been the case. And when one encounters the rather surprising case of a scholar who would claim that man is a descendant of the crocodile. The scholar and the primitive man both have a metaphysical idea, which each expresses in his own way.

On periods of social troubles and disturbed morality would pit science against religion. But when this does occur because of unexpected turns of history, such as in Russia particularly during the last war, and in France after the revolution of 1789, the God of science has crumbled pitifully to make room for science pure and simple: a humble servant of human progress. Moreover, especially after the latest developments in astronomy, science has become more and more conscious of its limited domain. Indeed, beyond the distant nebulae, beyond the many millions, and perhaps billions, of light years, there extends the unfathomable chasm of infinity, far inaccessible and incomprehensible to scientific thought because it is no longer within the scope of its subject of study: quantity, relations and state.

Quantity of what? State of what? Relation to what? These questions no longer have any meaning when applied to the realm beyond matter. Science no longer has any meaning beyond the last nebula, which borders the phenomenal world, at the threshold of the non-material infinite. Beyond this limit, only religious thought can say something intelligible: God knows.

Compiled by Mohammed Hashim Kamali
Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali

7. Writing on “Censorship in Islam” for an Encyclopedia from United States.
8. Working on a collection of my written works into a book on “Maqasid al-Shari’ah” with the assistance of Tengku Hazri.

Emeritus Professor Datuk Osman Bakar published four articles, including “The Qur’anic Identity of the Muslim Umma: Tawhidic Epistemology as its Foundation and Sustainer,” Islam and Civilisational Renewal, vol. 5 no. 3 (April, 2012), pp. 438-454; presented two papers at International Seminar on Dialogue of the Future between Japan and the Islamic World in Amman, Jordan on 1-2 March, and three public lectures.

Dr. Karim Douglas Crow

1. Presented a paper on “Morality of Leadership – Managing the Self,” at the Prime Minister’s Department Workshop for Oman delegation, 14th March 2012.

Dr. Christoph Marcinkowski published “Persian Historical Writing under the Safavids (1501-1722/36),” in Daniel Woolf (ed.), The Oxford History of Historical Writing and “Twelve Shi’ism in Thailand: From the Ayutthaya Period to the Present,” in Michael Feener (ed.), Shī‘ism and Beyond: Alid Piety in Muslim Southeast Asia. Preparing a lecture on “The Arab Spring: Challenge for Civil Liberties or Drive toward Islamist Theocracy?”

Abdul Karim Abdullah @ Leslie Terebessy has been writing a series of brief (1000 to 2000 words) tutorials on various aspect of Islamic finance. He is preparing a Viewpoint for the July issue of the ICR, contrasting asset-based and asset-backed sukuk. He is also writing a research paper highlighting the greater efficiency of financing on the basis of profit and loss sharing compared to interest-based financing.

Tengku Iskandar is finalising a draft of recommendations for action, on the topic of peace and security from the perspective of Islam, for publication as a policy issues paper.


Tengku Ahmad Hazri is inquiring into constitutional thought in Islam, currently writing an article on the rule of law and shorter pieces on related topics in addition to published contributions in the ICR. He is also helping Prof Kamali with the latter’s book on maqasid al-shari’ah (objectives of Shari’ah).

EVENTS AT IAIS MALAYSIA

MARCH 2012

A visit by delegates from Raden Fatah State Institute of Islamic Studies, Palembang, Indonesia headed by Dr Munar Hery. Date: 7th March 2012

Public Lecture ‘Islam in the Post-Arab Spring Arab World: Trends and Possibilities’ by Professor Dr Fathi Malikawi (Executive/Regional Director, International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), Jordan.) Date: 23rd March 2012

A visit by delegates from Royal Thai Embassy Moderation Study Tour 2012 led by Mr Songnak Saicheua (Minister and Deputy Chief in Mission, Royal Thai Embassy, Kuala Lumpur) Date: 28th March 2012

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following policy recommendations have been excerpted from longer research articles carried in IAIS Malaysia’s journal, Islam and Civilisational Renewal, Volume 3, Number 2, January 2012

Mohammad Hashim Kamali – Environmental Care in Islam: a Qur’anic Perspective
• Self-seeking individuals and institutions should be made responsible to repair the environmental damage they cause.
• Muslims have much to contribute to the evolving environmental discourse yet they need to articulate their resources, engage and develop the language of persuasion both within their countries and internationally.

Rafiu Ibrahim Adebayo – Abuse Nature and Face the Consequences: Climate Change from an Islamic Perspective
• It is a matter of religious and ethical duty to protect the environment; whoever damages the environment must be punished by the appropriate authorities before nature takes it upon herself to punish the whole world for the sin of a few.
• Ultimately, man should reduce his spirit of excessive materialism and show regard for other creatures of God in his dealings with nature.

Syed Serajul Islam – Canadian Muslims and Canada’s Domestic and Foreign Policy Issues: An Analysis
• The Canadian authorities would do well to see the involvement of ‘their’ fellow Muslims in public debates as an asset rather than a threat.
• Above all, Canadian Muslims should continue to participate in the national debate.

Afs A. Oladosu – Between the Honey and the Poison: Corruption and its Penances in Islamic Hermeneutics
• The involvement of some Muslims in acts of corruption reflects the disconnect between Islam in the text and the Islam in the context of existential realities of Muslim societies across the world.
• In addition, the issue of corruption should be addressed from a perspective that exceeds the usual discussion surrounding embelishment in corporate life.

Adnan Trakic – A Legal and Administrative Analysis of Inalienable Muslim Endowments (awqaf) in Bosnia and Herzegovina
• The attitude of the legislative and political organs of Bosnia and Herzegovina – from the time of the Habsburg period until today – was hostile and destructive towards the institution of waqf.
• There is also an urgent need for incorporation of fresh elements in the legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina that would positively change the attitude of the Muslim community towards the welfare of the waqf.

Asia Yusuf – Islam and Modernity: Remembering the Contribution of Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905)
• There is no incompatibility between Islam and modernity.
• ‘Abduh’s role needs to be considered pivotal in bridging what is often perceived as a gap between Islam and modernity.

RESEARCH, PUBLICATION AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali

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8. Working on a collection of my written works into a book on “Maqasid al-Shari’ah” with the assistance of Tengku Hazri.

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The International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia deeply regrets the urge by Yang Berhormat Datuk Zulkifli Noordin (Member of Parliament for Kulim–Bandar Baharu) for the Institute to be investigated on the ground of spreading pluralism as reported in Utusan Malaysia, 11 April 2012 (Wednesday). His urge may give the wrong impression to the general public as if IAIS Malaysia is active in spreading pluralism which contradicts the teachings of Islam. Such a misleading impression is possible because some Malaysian Muslims in this country have already understood “religious pluralism” as claiming that all religions are the same.

IAIS Malaysia would like to assert that it rejects religious pluralism which claims that all religions are the same. Nevertheless, it is also conscious of the fact that in contemporary thought, whether among Muslims or non-Muslims, there are understandings of pluralism that do not contravene the teachings of Islam. IAIS Malaysia is of the view that the best way to deal with issues on religious pluralism is not to judge all such beliefs as being contrary to Islam but, on the basis of the Holy Qur’an and rational arguments, to explain to the general public the Islamic perspective on religious pluralism so that the sanctity of Islam is safeguarded.

IAIS Malaysia, which was established in 2008 as an international Islamic think-tank by the former Prime Minister, YAB Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to promote the advancement of the ummah in various areas of life, has chosen the way of dialogue with all parties including non-Muslims in finding solutions to issues faced by the society and nation. IAIS Malaysia conducts its activities openly including programs that are meant to explain issues on religious pluralism from the Islamic perspective. For the past three years, it has organised many public lectures, seminars and conferences on a variety of issues of concern to the Muslim ummah. The plan by IAIS to hold a public lecture by Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr on the Islamic response to the concept of freedom of religion as espoused by secular belief is meant precisely to refute that belief. As a renowned Islamic scholar, he has the credentials to offer the best Islamic response to it. However due to health reasons which prevented him from travelling to this country, the initial plan to have the lecture was cancelled two months ago.

IAIS Malaysia welcomes constructive criticisms from anyone regarding its programs. Nevertheless it hopes that proper inquiry is made first before any criticism or allegation is made. Its door is always open for discussion and further information.

Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali
Chairman / Chief Executive Officer
IAIS Malaysia

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**EVENTS AT IAIS MALAYSIA**

**APRIL 2012**

**Public Lecture** ‘The Role of Islam in the Foundation of a New Inter-religious Dialogue Culture in the Contemporary World’ by Emeritus Professor Datuk Osman Bakar. It was co-organised with Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, University of Malaya.
Date: 4th April 2012

**Talk** ‘Executive Education and Leadership Development for the Global Ummah – A New Initiative in Madinah’ delivered by Dr Mohamed Moustafa Mahmoud, Executive Director, Madinah Institute of Leadership and Entrepreneurship (MILE). The talk is moderated by Emeritus Professor Datuk Dr Osman Bakar, Deputy CEO, IAIS Malaysia.
Date: 6th April 2012

**International Seminar on Islam in Myanmar**, jointly organised with the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) East Asia, Regional Islamic Da’wah Council of Southeast Asia and the Pacific (RISEAP), Institute for the Study of the Ummah and Global Understanding (ISUGU) and Myanmar Muslims Intellectual Forum (MMIF) based in Malaysia.
Date: 29th April 2012