

Conference, Symposium, and Panel Reports

Peace Strengthens Human Prosperity: Islam and World Peace

This conference, organized by the Faculty of Usuluddin at Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University (UNISSA), was held on 24-25 February 2010 at the Rizqun International Hotel in Gadong, Brunei. The 119 local and 40 international participants presented 78 working papers. Local and international media outlets and representatives of government bodies, as well as officers from the Department of Community Development, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Syariah Affairs Department, and the Brunei Economic Development Board, also attended. One of the main objectives was to clear up misconceptions about Islam in order to bridge the gap and strengthen relationships and cooperation between Muslim and western countries.

Abdul Muthalif Afuwardeen (conference co-chairman; dean, Faculty of Usuluddin, UNISSA) welcomed the audience and spoke of the importance of religion and peace and how Islam and Muslims have been wrongly portrayed as symbols of terrorism, underdevelopment, and mockery. Ustaz Hj Abdul Aziz Juned (state mufti) opened the event on behalf of Sultan Has-sanal Bolkiah and urged participants to spread the truth about Islam worldwide. Keynote speaker Ismail Ibrahim (chariman of Islam Hadhari, National University of Malaysia), analyzed how many westerners consider Islam a religion of violence, war, and suppression due to their misunderstanding of jihad. He also called for mutual understanding among all parties.

The first parallel session began with Abdul Monir Yaakob's (University of Malaya [UM]) claim that religious freedom is a basic principle for peace as regards Islam, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations, the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights, and the Malaysian constitution. Moh. Azam Moh. Adil (University Technology Mara) discussed Judge Datuk Lau Bee Lan's ruling on using "Allah" in the Catholic church in Malaysia, which had resulted in led to demonstrations and several churches being bombed and/or burned.

The second parallel session comprised Ismail Haji Abdullah (International Islamic University of Malaysia [IIUM]), Arip bin Kasmoo (University Kebangsaan Malaysia [UKM]), Abdul Muttalif Afuwardeen, Muhammad Zain Suemae (University Yala, Thailand), and Mohammed Eissa (University of the Emirates). Abdullah spoke on peace and violence in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, while Kasmoo focused on contemporary *dakwah* methods. Suemae discussed the efforts of South Thailand's Muslim intellectuals to bring peace, and Eissa elaborated upon Islam's concept of peace during times of peace and war.

The third parallel session consisted of Hajah Aynah bt Haji Yaakub (Department of Community Development, Brunei), Fariza bt Md Sham (UKM), Ratna Roshida Ab Razak (University Science Malaysia), Siti Rugayah Haji Tibek (UKM), and Syahiran Abd Latif (University Technology Malaysia [UITM]). Abd Latif pointed out that Allah created humanity from a single source and that the Messenger denied any inherent advantage to a particular ethnicity or skin color. Therefore, he maintained, there is no reason to fight each other.

The fourth parallel session started with Said Mohamed Ismail el-Sawy's (UNISSA) paper on world peace in reality and myth. The session featured Serdar Demirel (IIUM), Ahmed Hameed Mahluf (UM), Mohammad Reza Aram and Mazaheri Mohammad (Islamic Azad University, Tehran), and Abdullah b. Yusof (UM). Demirel elaborated on the contribution of the language, culture, and vision constructed by the Islamic revelation to world peace. He said that many Muslim countries have presented historical examples of how multicultural, multilingual, and multiracial populations can live together peacefully. Thus, Muslim communities could preserve their different languages and cultures within the same civilization and act upon the same worldview.

The afternoon session began with Saim Kayadibi (UM) and Muhammad Manzoor Malik (UM). Ahmad Hamdy Nafea (al-Azhar University, Cairo), Sayyed Abdul Hameed al-Mahdaly (UNISSA), Muhammad Haniff Hassan (University of Singapore), and Naseem Ahmad Shah (University of Kashmir, India) also participated. Kayadibi analyzed the penetrating question of whether religion or its followers create violence.

The last parallel session of the seminar's second sitting comprised Haris Abd Wahab (UM), Hj Abd Qadir Umar Usman (University Science Islam Malaysia [USIM]), Azman bin Yusof (UniKLMICET Melaka), Abdul Hafiz bin Hj Abdullah (University Technology Malaysia [UTM] Johor), and Adil Anuar Azmin (University Malaysia Perlis). Abd Wahab analyzed approaches and indicators for social welfare, a goal that all people, families, and commu-

nities seek to achieve. Usman talked about the Qur'anic understanding of the "good life," one characterized by personal well-being and peace. Abdul Hafiz spoke on how zakat helps build a socially just society by trying to improve the level of social justice. The evening's welcoming dinner, hosted by the UNISSA Organizing Community in the Rizqun International Hotel to honor the participants, was very impressive.

The second day was launched by Seyyed Hossein Azimidokht (Yazd University, Iran), who presented his spiritual account of Islam as a journey toward world peace. He explored the meaning(s) of spirituality according to several understandings, especially that of the Qur'an, and stressed that world peace could be achieved through a spiritually developed society. The second sitting's first parallel session featured Yakub Nazim Ahmad al-Sa'adi (Kolej Islam Dar Rizwan, Perak), Syed Zafar Mahmood (India), Phil Zainul Fuad (Institute Agama Islam Negeri, Indonesia), and Hakeem Ibrahim as-Syamiri (UKM). Mahmood, exploring the circulation of global wealth, discussed the roles of zakat and *sadaqah* in bringing peace to humanity.

The second parallel session, chaired by Naim Hj Ahmad (USIM), featured Zulkefli Hj Aini (Kolej University Islam), Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor (UM), Mohd Fauzi bin Mohd Amin (USIM), and Ahmad Fakhurrrazi b. Mohd Zabidi (UKM). Roslan outlined how Muslims began to dominate Islamicjerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis) in 637, a time when the region was occupied by non-Muslims. Rome had prohibited Jews from living entering Aelia (Islamicjerusalem) almost 500 years earlier; the new Muslim rulers lifted this ban since they considered this area as vital to Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

The following parallel session featured Abd Rahman Obied Hussien (USIM), Faizuri bin Abd Latif (UM), Jasni Sulong (USM), Suraya Sintang (University Malaysia Sabah), Majeed al-Dalal'ah (UNISSA), Aria Merkestein (UNISSA), Azhar Abdul Rahman (UITM), Rahimin Affandi Abd Rahim (UM), Fatimah Abdullah (IIUM), and Shamsiah Mohamad (UM). Al-Dalal'ah focused on the Muslims' duty to respect non-Muslims in the light of the Prophet's guidance. Merkestein talked about applying basic human needs theory to prevent conflict, analyzed the Swiss vote in favor of banning new minarets, and said that this violates basic human needs.

The seminar's parallel sessions concluded with the final parallel session. Chaired by Hajredin Hoxha (Bosnia), it consisted of Amar Abdullah Nasih Ulwan (UM), Muhd Abd Latif Rejab bin Abd 'Aati (University of the Emirates), Moh Hussain Ahmad (UNISSA), Masthurhah bt Ismail (UITM, Perak), and Nabilah Yufof (USIM). Hoxha, basing himself upon scholarly Qur'anic commentaries, underlined how classic and modern Qur'anic com-

mentators envisaged world peace; Ulwan focused on the reason (*`illah*) for jihad, as understanding why people call for launching it will help achieve world peace.

The regional seminar concluded with twenty-four resolutions presented by seminar chairman Sulaiman Ibrahim al-Barruhiy. Among them were to call upon political leaders to study Islam and its eternal value on world peace and for humanity to come together under the banner of world peace. The resolutions stressed the value of the culture of peace, tolerance, dialogue, similarities, coexistence, and diversity and how pursuing these values can prevent violence, obsession, extremism, discrimination, and hatred.

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