

**Webinar: Harmony Week: An Interfaith Dialogue on Religious Responses to COVID-19 in Malaysia  
(18 February 2021)**

*Wan Naim Wan Mansor*

As the COVID-19 pandemic reached its one-year mark, the role of religious institutions became more vital than ever. Religious actors and leaders became essential for addressing various new challenges, such as ensuring a safe environment for religious gatherings, building trust between parties, promoting effective communication and advocacy, and responding to the needs of the community. Informed and nuanced religious voices should be part of the broad policy discussion in this rapidly evolving situation. Active and continuous collaboration between various faith groups at a substantive level will not only strengthen the community as a whole, but also be key to mitigating the negative impact of the pandemic.

Against this backdrop, IAIS Malaysia organised an interfaith dialogue featuring representatives from local religious communities: Muhammad Faisal Abdul Aziz (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia), Ir. Ang Choo Hong (Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia), Jason Leong (Christians for Peace and Harmony in Malaysia), and Gowri P. S. Thangaya (Malaysia Hindu Sangam). Among the topics raised and discussed were the impact of pandemic lockdowns on religious activities, the various strategies adopted by religious communities when providing spiritual and material assistance to affected members, and the various recommendations that have been made to enhance public policy related to religion.

**International Webinar: Shariah and the Pursuit of Sustainable Societies  
(24 February 2021)**

*Muhamad Sayuti Mansor*

On 24 February 2021, the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM) organised ‘The International Webinar on Shariah and the Pursuit of Sustainable Societies,’ featuring several prominent Muslim intellectuals, namely: Emeritus Professor Tan Sri Dato’ Dzulkifli Abdul Razak

(IIUM), Prof Dr Jasser Auda (Maqasid Institute), Professor Dato' Dr Mohammad Hashim Kamali (IAIS Malaysia), Professor Datin Dr Raihanah Haji Abdullah (APIUM-University Malaya), and Emeritus Professor Datuk Dr Osman Bakar (ISTAC-IIUM), with Professor Dr Thameem Ushama (ISTAC-IIUM) as moderator. This webinar gave important input from the Islamic perspective on the pursuit of a sustainable society, a subject that is now gaining currency with the promulgation of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, first implemented 2015).

Emeritus Professor Dzulkifli stressed the inherency of sustainability in Islam, as God the Almighty has provided humankind with sustained, balanced, and harmonious resources. Only when humans go astray and exploit nature irresponsibly does corruption and destruction spread extensively. Professor Jasser Auda criticised the shariah's partialistic view, which hinders our correct understanding of sustainable development. He thus proposed a comprehensive and holistic idea of shariah taken from the discipline of *maqasid al-shari'ah* as a solution to promoting a sustainable society. Subsequently, Professor Hashim Kamali elucidated the theoretical concept of sustainability from an Islamic perspective, highlighting the principles of vicegerency (*khilafah*) and moderation (*wasatiyyah*). Professor Raihanah emphasised women's issues, especially the need for legal reform and gender equality when achieving a sustainable society. Emeritus Professor Osman explored the prospects of developing a sustainable community in the Muslim world by learning lessons from the experience of the West, thereby avoiding its pitfalls. The three hour seminar ended with a lively Q&A exchange with the online participants.

**Webinar: Roundtable Discussion (RTD):  
'Islam, Radicalism and Extremism in the Age of Pandemic'  
(25 March 2021)**

*Muhamad Sayuti Mansor*

As the COVID-19 pandemic overshadowed and preoccupied our attention, this roundtable discussion brought public attention back to the ever-present threat of violence and terrorism led by radical or extreme ideologies. The discussion revolved around the interplay between fundamentalist interpretations of Islam, extremism, and the global pandemic. Invited panellists were Professor Dato' Dr Mohammad Hashim Kamali (IAIS Malaysia), KH Yahya Cholil Staquf (Nahdlatul Ulama Indonesia), Dr Ahmad El-Muhammady (ISTAC-IIUM), and SAC Azman Omar (Bukit Aman Special Branch, Royal Malaysia Police). The