

**Webinar: Forum Hari Malaysia 2021: Perpaduan dalam
Semangat Keluarga Malaysia
(Forum on Malaysia Day 2021: Unity in the Spirit of
Malaysian Family)
(15 September 2021)**

Wan Naim Wan Mansur

In commemoration of the 58th Malaysian Day, IAIS Malaysia has organised a forum on the topic of unity and nation-building featuring four eminent Malaysians. Invited speakers were SS Datuk Bungsu Aziz Jaafar, Mufti of Sabah; Prof Emeritus Dato' Dr Teo Kok Seong, Principal Fellow of Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), UKM; Dato' Dr Madeline Berma, Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM); and Muhammad Faisal Abdul Aziz, President of Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM). The forum was moderated by Assoc Prof Dr Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil, representing IAIS Malaysia. Mufti Bungsu, in his opening presentation, identifies three components from Prophet Muhammad's leadership that contribute towards his success in uniting the warring tribes in Madinah. The three components are: religion, brotherhood, and the constitution of Madinah (*sahifah Madinah*), and these components form the bedrock of toleration, acceptance, and unity in the Medinan society. Extracting lessons from this model, according to Bungsu, is essential in developing a framework that will unite Malaysians from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Teo, commenting on the state of unity between ethnic groups in the country, argued that ethnic relations remain fragile (*rapuh*), especially in West Malaysia. This situation, among others, stems from the 'integration' model adopted by the country which is the opposite of the 'assimilation model'. In the integration model, a community is not required to abandon their identity, while the assimilation model demands a mandatory removal of ethnic origin for the purpose of uniformity. Teo also refers to the recently introduced concept of '*Keluarga Malaysia*' and pointed out the several virtues of adopting the 'familial' concept which promotes empathy and moderations. Madeline, sharing her perspective as a commissioner of SUHAKAM and Sarawakian of Iban descent, emphasised the need for honesty in assessing the state of ethnic relations which is accompanied by genuine efforts to reconcile differences. Madeline also called for fresh narratives for unity, particularly those that address real challenges such as the present COVID-19 pandemic. Faisal, representing the youth perspectives, drew from his experience leading an Islamic NGO and emphasised the concept of '*Bangsa Malaysia*'. According to Faisal, present obstacles to unity in the

country include the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, extreme political divisions, and recurring ethnic clashes. In brief, reform proposals to enhance national unity include widening the role of Bahasa Malaysia in society, repositioning the role of *Rukun Negara* as a basis for unity, and expanding the role of religion in promoting good communal values.

**Webinar: Round Table Discussion (RTD): The Return of the Taliban
and the Legal and Humanitarian Implications
(17 September 2021)**

Muhamad Sayuti Mansor

In conjunction with the recent political development in Afghanistan, the International Law and Maritime Affairs Unit (ILMA), Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws (AIKOL) IIUM on 17 September 2021 has organised a roundtable discussion entitled ‘The Return of the Taliban and the Legal and Humanitarian Implications.’ This RTD is moderated by Dr Muhamad Hassan Ahmad, with welcoming remarks by Professor Dr Farid Sufian Shuaib, Dean of the AIKOL. This discussion included four presentations by Associate Professor Dr Mohammad Tahir Sabit, Professor Dr Mohammad Naqib Eishan, Professor Dr Abdul Ghafur Hamid, and Professor Dr Najibah Mohd Zin, and a concluding remarks by Professor Dato’ Dr Mohammad Hashim Kamali, the Founding CEO of IAIS Malaysia.

Mohammad Tahir provided an overview of the current situation in Afghanistan. While the first Taliban-led government has failed due to the lack of international recognition and economic sanction, the recent return of the Taliban looks more promising as evidence from the recognition of the de-facto status of the new administration, albeit unofficially. Despite that, the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is becoming more critical. A combination of several catastrophes including drought, the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing international economic sanction have put Afghan’s lives in jeopardy, and Tahir urged the international community to prioritise the need of the Afghan people above all else. Mohammad Naqib Eishan then focused on the question of the international legitimacy towards the new Taliban administration. He highlighted the importance of legitimacy for a government to survive and cited that the failure of the previous local governments in Afghanistan was caused by this lack of legitimacy. Thus, he stresses the need for the new Taliban’s regime to have a clear foreign policy in earning international legitimacy and to respect Afghanistan’s constitution.