

Misled Malaysian Youngsters Regard It As An Honour To Be Part Of IS, Panel Told Bernama

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KUALA LUMPUR, March 12 (Bernama) -- Malaysians, especially the youngsters who join or support the Islamic State (IS), consider it an honour to be part of the militant group, said Ahmad El-Muhammady, a Panel member of the Royal Malaysia Police Rehabilitation Programme for terrorist detainees.

Sharing his experience in dealing with IS supporters who have been detained on their way out of the country to join the terror group at a roundtable discussion here today, Ahmad said it was also the current trend to be a member of the IS.

The discussion themed "Recent Security Threats and Freedom of Expression," was organised by the Institute of Diplomacy & Foreign Relations (IDFR).

"What we fear is that when they come back (to Malaysia), they would be brainwashed with the group's ideology and ultimately pose a threat to the security of the nation," he told Bernama after the conference.

As such, he felt that the formulation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) was very crucial to curb the spread of IS ideology among citizens, pointing out that terrorism had to be contained with a proper law.

"I hold the view that the government has taken a progressive step and a timely one by proposing the POTA, it has to be expedited because we face with a critical situation now (on the IS threat).

"If we look at the situation elsewhere, many countries have formulated laws to combat terrorism, and I think what the government is doing is nothing unusual," he said.

Ahmad, who is also a researcher at the Centre For Foundation Studies, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), rejected claims that the POTA is a new way to replace the Internal Security Act (ISA) 1960 because the procedure and the act itself were different from the ISA.

According to reports, the formulation of the POTA which is specifically to address terrorism by militant groups such as the IS, will be tabled in the current sitting of parliament. The ISA, which was abolished by the government in 2011 was replaced by the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA) aimed at maintaining public peace and security.

Meanwhile, HELP University's Institute of Crime & Criminology Director Datuk Akhbar Satar opined that religious departments need to play a bigger role in the long term to enlighten the people, especially the youths of the true meaning of Islam and what IS, which was propagating jihad, was all about.

Religious departments, like the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jakim) for example should go to schools and institutes of higher learning to explain further on the IS and Jihad, he said.

He said that since there has not been much explanation by these religious departments, some of the youths went to Syria for what is referred to as 'Jihad Al-Nikah.'

"This means that when you go there, you can get married to them (militants), give them sex and supply whatever they want and you are said will go to heaven ... this is not a true Islamic principle," he stressed.

He also pointed out to the various methods used by the IS like the Internet and Facebook to entice youths to join the militant group.

"If you look at the Boko Haram (the militant group in Nigeria), what they did is that they tackle youths, because this is the best age for them to recruit and employ you," he said.

"This is what is happening right now in Malaysia, where the IS is trying to influence the youths through Facebook and Internet," he said, noting that that there were almost 20 million Internet users in Malaysia and 13 million Facebook users.

The panel at the roundtable discussion included University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus' Professor of Media and Communication Studies Prof Zaharom Nain and IIUM's Head of the Department of Political Science, Dr Tunku Mohar Tunku Mohd cMokhtar, who was the moderator. Also present was IDFR director-general Datuk Hussin Nayan.

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