

**Malaysian Families Joining 'IS' On The Rise - Police
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 4 (Bernama) -- The number of families from Malaysia joining the militant group, 'Islamic State' (IS), is increasing and at least eight families are already in Syria currently.

Principal Assistant Director of the Counter-Terrorism Division, Special Branch in Bukit Aman, SAC Datuk Ayub Khan Mydin Pitchay said five children aged between one and 12 years were also brought by their parents to Syria.

"What is of greater concern is when the influence of the IS is becoming viral to the extent that it is capable of influencing families to migrate and so far, eight families are already in Syria.

"The ideological influence as well as the training provided to the IS members are seen as too powerful to the extent that there are members who are Malaysians who have issued warnings that they would kill their family if they joined the Malaysian government in trying to oppose the IS.

"Such warnings are not only issued to the authorities but their family members too. One of them who is now in Syria has issued a warning to the family via the facebook that he would kill his mother, father and siblings who join the government in opposing the IS," he told reporters, here Wednesday.

Ayub Khan said so far at least 500 Facebook accounts were identified as carrying out activities to promote, recruit and attempt to encourage Malaysians to fight in Syria.

He said there was no benchmark to indicate that the involvement of Malaysian nationals with the IS was declining although many arrests and operations had been carried out with the involvement of youths in their 20's being the highest.

Ayub Khan said most Malaysian nationals who went to Syria used their own money by selling their personal properties such as houses, cars, motorcycles and so on including making personal loans, but there were also some who were sponsored.

Currently, he said, 61 Malaysian nationals were detected to be in Syria to join the IS militant group and of this figure, 10 were women while the latest arrests on those suspected to be involved with the IS in this country as of yesterday was 71.

"This figure of 61 also includes children as young as 14 years old who joined family members there...whereas the number of Malaysian fatalities in Syria since last year was seven people," he said.

The most fearful threat when they return was that they would form a network to topple the government because their ideology considered the formation of the Islamic government was only through war and not the democratic system through the general election which was practised currently, Ayub Khan said.

On the involvement of Malaysian students in countries located near Syria and Iraq and undergoing IS training in Syria, Ayub Khan said there was a possibility that some of them were undergoing IS military training especially during the semester holidays and so on.

In a similar development, at least 100 members of the Islamic State (IS) who are Malaysian and Indonesian nationals have joined an affiliated group of the IS known as 'Katibah Nusantara Lid Daulah Islamiah'.

The affiliated group, also known as Majmu'ah Al Arkhabiliy, was formed to facilitate its members to communicate according to the language that was understood by them, he said.

"So far, we are not able to do a breakdown on the number of Malaysian nationals...the group was set up last year," he said.

Ayub Khan pointed out that individuals who were detected to have been in Syria or had been detained in Malaysia on suspicions of being involved with the IS had their assets and vehicles frozen and they had been blacklisted.

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