

COUNTERING AND PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

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MENTERI MALAYSIA

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Mr Chairman,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. I join earlier speakers in expressing my appreciation to President Obama for spearheading and galvanising the international community's campaign to combat and ultimately eradicate - Insh'Allah - the spread of the so-called Islamic State.
2. We must give those in IS a clear choice. Renounce your virulent creed of hate, violence and extremism and be guided back towards the righteous path, or face the consequences.
3. Malaysia completely and unequivocally rejects any attempt to associate the wicked crimes they perpetrate with Islam.
4. We condemn their blatant misrepresentation of the *Deen* when they say that their sadistic brutality, torture and murder of innocent men, women and children - Muslims and non-Muslims alike - is justified in the name of a religion that is truly one of peace, justice, tolerance and compassion.

5. My region - Southeast Asia - has not been spared this threat, and to counter this we have taken proactive steps, both nationally and within the framework of ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.
6. As Chair of ASEAN this year, Malaysia will be hosting two key ministerial-level meetings on transnational crime, and on the rise of radicalisation and violent extremism, in Kuala Lumpur over the next few days.
7. Later this year, ASEAN Heads of State and Government will also deliberate on these issues. Let me assure everyone present that we take them very seriously indeed.
8. At the national level, we have strengthened the legal framework by updating and, where necessary, enacting new legislation. We have also undertaken measures to strengthen the administrative and operational capacities of the relevant law enforcement authorities. We must make pre-emptive arrests if necessary, and if there is irrefutable evidence, to save innocent lives.
9. Because we have fortunately not suffered a major terrorist outrage in Malaysia, some appear to believe that we are not afflicted by this scourge. Nothing could be further from the truth. The work done by the relevant authorities is largely unsung, for reasons of security.
10. But our counter-terrorism forces have been unceasing in their attempts to identify extremists who wish to travel to the Middle East via Malaysia - and stopped many from ruining their lives and the lives of others. They have also arrested over 100 suspected of links with IS. There are those who wish to bring their barbarity and bombings to Malaysia. We will not let them.

11. These successes would not have been possible without close collaboration at the international level, and we will continue to deepen our cooperation with like minded nations, sharing timely intelligence, working with relevant military, police and cyber security to deal with this insidious threat.

12. However, these efforts are only part of what is necessary. IS has harnessed a highly effective approach to communications and messaging. The so-called online terrorists have been deployed to devastating effect, inspiring too many of the impressionable, the vulnerable and the excluded to join their ranks.

13. A focused attempt to counter the narrative and online presence of IS is required. Southeast Asia currently lacks an overarching programme to do this, so we must address this and efforts are underway.

14. I believe that with the necessary support and participation, this could become an important bulwark at the forefront of region-wide efforts to amplify anti-IS messaging.

15. This work could not be more important. For the lies that IS employs are insidious. For instance, they claim that it is their duty to destroy historical sites, because the Prophet Muhammad destroyed the idols that had been introduced into the Ka`ba in Mecca.

16. This is based on a false analogy. The Ka`ba was built by the Prophet Ibrahim for the worship of the One True God, and later generations added the idols. The Prophet Muhammad was commanded to purify the Ka`ba of these idols for its use by his followers, to bring it back to its original form.

17. The historical sites being destroyed by ISIS were never used for the worship of the One God and then later desecrated; so the argument for destroying them does not and cannot apply. Moreover, God informs us that these sites we travel by, and which denote past civilizations – some of which were global superpowers of their time, but are now no more – are signs to remind us not to be arrogant, but to walk the earth humbly.

18. Moderation, or “wasatiyyah” in Islam, and its associated values such as humbleness, compassion and love for our fellow man - these are noble virtues that IS and their fellow extremists are lack totally. Retelling the narrative of the true Islam that elevates these virtues is as vital in countering extremism as putting a stop to the barbarities that these misguided people perpetrate.

19. Let me say again: Malaysia stands with all present today to redouble these efforts. We will not allow imposters to besmirch the name of a religion which, in its true form - if interpreted correctly - is a light to mankind.

Thank you.

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