

YAB PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
DERADICALISATION AND COUNTERING VIOLENCE EXTREMISM 2016

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PERDANA MENTERI MALAYSIA

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Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

Assalammualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh,

A very good morning and Salam 1Malaysia.

Your Royal Highness,

The Honourable Dato' Sri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Deputy Prime Minister of
Malaysia and Minister of Home Affairs,

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. On behalf of the Malaysian Government and the people of Malaysia, I wish you all a warm *Selamat Datang*, and may I extend our appreciation for your coming from all over the world to attend this important conference.

2. I would particularly like to welcome the Ministers and representatives who will be delivering statements on the policies of their respective countries on deradicalisation and countering violent extremism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. We are gathered at a time when the subject you are to discuss over the next two days could not be more urgent. When the idea for this conference was mooted at the Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on 2 October 2015, the world was already too familiar with the brutality and barbarity of Daesh.
4. The sufferings of our brothers and sisters in Syria and Iraq, where Daesh has displaced millions, enslaved thousands, and forced local populations to live under their evil, perverted tyranny, grieved us all to the core.
5. Since then, we have been horrified by the attacks on Paris, Istanbul, Ankara, Beirut and Jakarta, and the bombing of the Russian passenger jet over Sinai.
6. Having been overshadowed by Daesh, Al Qaeda now seems to be engaged in an obscene competition with the newer terrorist group. Its affiliate in the Islamic Maghreb showed that it can still commit outrages too, with its recent assaults on hotels in Mali and Burkina Faso.
7. Hundreds have died, and many have been terribly injured. And for what? Not for Islam - as there can be nothing Islamic about terrorism. These groups blaspheme against a religion of peace, tolerance and understanding. They appal the vast majority of Muslims who say loud and clear: you do not act in our name.

8. But we must concede their appeal and reach. Not just to the deluded, or to those living on the margins with no hope or purpose.
9. On the contrary, many of those who have joined, or who have tried to join these groups, are idealistic young men and women, some of them are even professionals who have been cruelly deceived by recruiters who pretend to be their friends, and who falsely claim that their actions are not only justified, but demanded, by religion.
10. This is a challenge that faces us all around the world. We are far from immune to this danger in Malaysia. Just this month, our police force arrested three of our citizens who were trying to enter Syria to join Daesh.
11. A young boy of 16 dressed in their uniform was taken into custody after holding a woman at knifepoint in the north west of our country. Think how impressionable teenagers are. Was he really an evil person, or had he been brainwashed and misled?
12. And only ten days ago, another young man was arrested. He admitted that he was planning a suicide attack, here in Malaysia.
13. This threat is very real, and my government takes it very seriously. This is why we passed the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act or SOSMA, the Special Measures against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and the National Security Council Act.
14. When other countries have come under attack, some have expressed their dismay that they do not have the appropriate and effective legislation which allows them to deal with the problem promptly and effectively. In some countries, it is not an offence to support Daesh, nor to travel abroad for terrorist-military training.

15. I will not allow Malaysia to be so open to infiltration. The law is there to protect us all, but the evil intention of those who want to bomb, maim and behead can never be placed above the peaceful majority who firmly reject violence and war.

16. It is right to talk about striking a balance between civil liberties and national security. But, let me tell you this. There are no civil liberties under Daesh, and they are no shield against those who are set on committing acts of terrorism. The best way to uphold civil liberties is to ensure the safety of the nation.

17. I make no apology for taking every step to preserve that safety, and for making the safety of all Malaysians and our friends from abroad who visit us, this is my priority. We will not wait for an outrage to take place before putting all measures necessary in place.

Ladies and gentlemen,

18. An important part of countering violent extremism not only lies in police and military action alone but in clearing away distortions and lies about religion, about Islam - in retelling the narrative of Islam so that we make it absolutely clear that it is the extremists who are the blasphemers. It is they who insult the Holy Quran and the Prophet Muhammad when they claim to act in their name or on their authority.

19. In Malaysia, we have a long history of emphasising that moderation - the practice of wasatiyya - is a Quranic injunction. It is compulsory, it is a principle that must be upheld.

20. In fact, there was a Malaysian sheikh - Datuk Dr Afifi al Akiti - who wrote one of the first fatwas after the 2005 London bombings in which he explicitly refuted the so-called religious basis for terrorism, and showed that these extremists have no theological ground to stand on.
21. My predecessor, prime minister Tun Abdullah Badawi, contributed considerably to the scholarship demonstrating that balance, i.e. the pursuit of knowledge, and the protection of women and minorities are Islamic - and that extremism is not.
22. And I am glad to say that he was one of the first to endorse the Global Movement of Moderates that I called for at the United Nations General Assembly in 2010. He described it as “a powerful platform that can rally people of all faiths behind the principle of faith in God and doing good deeds.”
23. These, ladies and gentlemen, are among the tools we can use - both to counter violent extremism, and to assist in guiding former radicals back to the right path.
24. UN Security Council Resolution 2178 requires member countries to formulate a programme for returning foreign terrorist fighters. I am happy to announce that the special rehabilitation module that we have formulated in Malaysia has been translated into three languages - Arabic, English and French - and will be distributed to all participants at this Conference.
25. For this is why we are here. To enhance cooperation between our security agencies. To share and analyse the best practices from our various deradicalisation programmes.

26. To help identify the target groups who are vulnerable to extreme militant ideology. And to discuss the role of governments in rehabilitation efforts, and how best to return any of our citizens who have lost their way to fruitful and responsible lives.

Ladies and gentlemen,

27. Here in Malaysia, we are firm in our resolve and fully committed to the fight against violent extremism, and we have initiated the establishment of Regional Digital Counter-Messaging Communications Centre, which will synchronise efforts in ASEAN and beyond.

28. It is vital that this centre utilises the studies that illustrate why there is nothing at all “Islamic” about the state that Daesh intend to set up. And it is vital that all authorities - our muftis, our media commissions, our tech-savvy young people for whom social media is an integral part of their daily lives - to ensure that the messaging the centre puts out is solid, persuasive and real.

29. It must cut through the rhetoric, and the sadly seductive approaches of the militants. It must state, very clearly, why they are wrong, and why true Muslims have nothing to do with this ideology of hatred and destruction. Digital media is the new frontier on which much of this war must be fought. Its centrality to our efforts cannot be overestimated.

Ladies and gentlemen,

30. Let me assure you that here in Malaysia we will be dauntless in this battle, as are the very brave men and women of our armed forces and police. They have saved countless lives by foiling terrorist plots and putting themselves

in danger. Their work is often unsung for security reasons, but I would like to pay tribute to them now.

Ladies and gentlemen,

31. We will remain tireless in our endeavours to reverse the ideological misconceptions and falsehoods that fuel extremism. I am sure that this conference will make an important contribution, and will serve as a useful platform for the sharing of expertise and experience.

32. And above all in the end, insyaAllah, we will prevail.

Thank you.

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