

Keynote Address at KL Summit 2019

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INTRODUCTION

1. As host of this meeting, I would like to welcome Your Majesties, Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen to this Kuala Lumpur Summit.

2. The Kuala Lumpur Summit started as a gathering of Muslim scholars and intellectuals who are concerned about the present situation of the Muslim Ummah, their countries and their religion of Islam.

PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS ISLAM

3. If we care to honestly assess our situation, we must admit that we and our religion have become the subject of much vilification and defamation.

4. Muslims and Islam have been equated with terrorism and failures of Government, of irrationality and acts unworthy of civilised behaviour. Muslim countries are accused of authoritarianism and lack of concern for human rights.

5. There is not a single Muslim country which is classified as developed. All, despite their immense wealth are categorised as developing countries. And they are all weak and incapable of protecting the Muslim Ummah, as is their duty by their religion.

6. We can accuse the non-Muslim world for being biased, and unjust in their assessments. But we cannot deny the facts that there are fratricidal wars in several Muslim countries, that many are beholden to the powerful non-Muslim nations, that Muslims are running away from their own countries to seek refuge in non-Muslim countries.

7. We cannot deny that we are largely dependent on the non-Muslims for most of our needs. In fact, although the Quran enjoins upon us to be prepared to protect the Ummah, we are unable to do so because for a long time we cannot even equip ourselves with the means to ward off the attacks by others. We depend upon our detractors to supply us.

8. There was a time when Muslims were recognised for their advanced civilisation. They were able to spread the teachings of Islam to the world of that time. They were well-versed in all fields of knowledge, including the sciences and engineering, especially the manufacture of goods.

9. But not now. Today we have lost the respect of the world. We are no longer the source of human knowledge nor the model of human civilisation. For a long time in the 18th to mid-20th centuries Muslim countries were all dominated and occupied by European powers. We have now largely freed ourselves. But we have not done much better as independent nations. Indeed, some of us have regressed to the point of once again being dependent on our former colonial masters.

THE RISE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

10. We lament the decline and the fall of the great Islamic civilisation. We pray for help from Allah S.W.T. But surely, we must know that Allah S.W.T. has stated in the Quran that He will not answer to our prayers unless we do something to alleviate our situation.

11. Many will claim that they have done so. They are prepared to die and are dying in the effort to protect Islam and the Ummah. But we had done more damage to our religion by our disreputable acts of terror. We may claim to be performing jihad but the result is more oppression of Muslims everywhere. We are being expelled from our own countries, rejected by asylum countries, oppressed and condemned. We have caused fear of Islam to the point of Islamophobia being created.

12. Yes, some, in their anger and frustration, have resorted to indiscriminate acts of violence. Innocent people have been killed, including their fellow Muslims. They have not exempted the countries which have given them refuge. Indiscriminate acts of terror were also perpetuated there.

13. These are facts. Yes. We are angry and frustrated. We cannot wage a conventional war. No country would help us. But even so, what do we gain

by such indiscriminate violent acts. Nothing. If at all the situation has become worse. We can declare that Islam does not advocate such violence. But for as long as we act in anger, as long as we do things that frightens people, and worse still if we proclaim that we are performing Islamic jihad, the fear of Muslim and Islam will not be diminished.

14. We claim that these are done by other Muslim sects, which we claim are not the true followers of Islam. But our detractors and victims do not care about our different sects. For them we are all Muslims. The differences between sects are irrelevant.

THE ISLAMIC CIVILISATION

15. This is the present situation. It was not so in the past. We know that in the past the Islamic Civilisation was highly respected. It was leading not only in adherence to the teachings of Islam as a religion of peace but in all other fields of human achievements. Muslims lead in the knowledge of the sciences, in human development, in infrastructure development, in the governance and development of their countries. Muslims build great cities, sailed and map the seas, traded between east and west along the Silk Road and a great many other things that enhanced the reputation of Islam and the Muslims. Their military strength was incomparable. Muslim and their countries were treated with respect.

16. Then around the 15th Century of the Common Era, the Muslim civilisation declined. They neglected all acquisition of knowledge other than that on Islam. Scholars of Islam came up with differing interpretations. The result is the formation of differing sects at odds with each other.

17. Muslims lost their countries. They were dominated by European powers. They become colonies of the Europeans.

18. From this decline they have not recovered, even after regaining independence. There were some attempts to find the reasons for their decline. But clearly their discussions and scholarly writings have not resulted in the recovery of their past greatness.

19. So, if the future remains as we are now, we will suffer continuous oppression – we will decline further and our great religion will be denigrated as a religion of failure, of oppression and terrorism. Muslims will be turned away from their own Muslim countries to seek refuge in non-Muslim countries. The Islamic ummah will not be protected as enjoined by the Quran.

THE AFTERLIFE AND LIVING TODAY

20. We can console ourselves by believing that this world is not for us. We as Muslims will have a better world in the afterlife, in the Akhirat.

21. But even though Allah has enjoined upon us to prepare for the next world, we are also reminded that we must not forget our share in this world. (As revealed in Surah Ar Ra'd – Verse 11)

22. We pray to Allah asking that we be saved in this world, that Allah would protect us in this life.

23. But Allah has said in the Quran that He will only help us if we do something to help ourselves first.

24. Are we doing anything Yes, we claim we are carrying out the jihad. But is doing anything forbidden by Allah the way of our jihad. The Al-Quran expressly forbids killing, above all killing a fellow Muslim. But Muslim are

killing each other indiscriminately; killing innocent people, including fellow Muslims. Is this a jihad for Islam

25. I think you will agree that these killings, these fratricidal wars are not the jihad advocated by Islam. If they are not, then we are not doing what is needed to warrant help from Allah. Our prayers will not be answered by Allah S.W.T. We need to do what is enjoined by Allah S.W.T. in the Quran.

26. We were one Ummah before. But we have broken up into nation states with boundaries separating us from each other. And in different states, our practices of our religion differs. And this has broken our unity. We are no longer brothers in Islam. We no longer have a paramount ruler – the Caliph or Khalifah.

GOVERNANCE, REFORMS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

27. But even as small states we do not govern well. Whether authoritarian or not, good governance is not impossible. We do not have to be oppressive. Indeed, if we abide by the teachings of Islam, our religion, good governance should result.

28. In any society, justice will determine the well-being of the citizens. The Quran repeatedly urges us to judge with justice. But we are often lacking in this area. Our people are judged under different and differing laws. Some are oppressive or manifestly unjust.

29. Human societies have changed. Now all kinds of things are happening to human society. We can no longer isolate ourselves. No country may remain peopled by 100% Muslims now. Other religions, other values, other ways of life affect us even if they do not live among us.

30. In the days of the Prophet it was possible for carvings and drawn images to be banned. Today that is impossible. And we have been forced to ignore the injunction or to interpret them differently.

31. Muslims today are not prone to worshipping carved or drawn images. Certainly, they will not worship photographs or images even if they move and speak. They know these are not deities to be worshipped.

32. When electricity was introduced, some of the scholars at that time declared it was haram to install electric lights in mosques. Peak caps and tight trousers were also forbidden. But not anymore.

33. However other practices remain. And we are so committed to these practices that we are prepared to punish those who fail to observe them. Yet in other Muslim societies these practices are no longer regarded as forbidden by Islam.

34. Today's human achievements are far from what we had ever imagined. We can fly and fly at tremendous speed. We can speak across thousands of miles as if we are in front of each other. We can move things without being connected with the object.

35. But all these have not been invented or developed by us. Nevertheless, we have to use them. And this means we have to be dependent on other people whose knowledge and skill have resulted in their being developed. I have already mentioned our inability to defend the Ummah. On the other hand, our detractors are ready to provide us with the means to fight and kill each other.

36. In the days of the Prophet what were needed were bows and arrows, swords and lances, and war horses. But today we need guns and missiles, tanks and armoured cars, fighter planes and bombers, warships of steel. But except for some primitive weaponry, we cannot produce these by ourselves. So, we are not able to prepare for the defence of the Ummah, i.e. we are unable to obey the injunctions of our religion.

37. Why are we unable to provide for the defence of ourselves It is because we don't have the knowledge of the sciences to enable us to build these essential weaponries. And because we are not trying to help ourselves, Allah will not grant us our wishes in our prayers.

38. And because of this, the Ummah are being oppressed, being killed, expelled from their own countries, dying at sea and on land as they try to escape.

CONCLUSION

39. We may see a bleak picture painted but it doesn't mean that all is lost. We have to reflect on the past, when the Islamic civilisation was glorious and we were capable of warding off attempts to seize our land.

40. It is also a fact that Islam was a great civilisation when its adherents had observed the true teachings of Islam, when they were united, hardworking and keen to learn and explore the world in search of knowledge. And that pursuit for knowledge did not have any restrictions, limitations or caveats that only caters for the study of religion and divinity.

41. Hence the reason why we are gathered here today. We gather some leaders from a few Muslim nations because we do not want the start to be unwieldy, when the differences in our perceptions are so great as to be unimplementable.

42. We are hoping that we will be able to spark a sense of purpose to pursue specific ventures and tangible programmes that the few nations involved can start working on them.

43. If our efforts yield fruits, we would like to take them up with other Muslim nations that share our concerns and desire to do something to improve the plight of our brethren.

44. May Allah S.W.T bless us in this small step that we are taking.

Thank you.

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