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UUM (University Utara Malaysia), Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia
Mindananawon Initiatives for Cultural Dialogues, Ateneo de Davao University, Philippines
Thaksin University, Songkhla, Thailand

**THE RISE OF RELIGION-BASED
POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN ASIA**
A Threat or a Chance for National Development?
Preparatory Workshop for the ASEM People's Forum Beijing October 2008

University Utara Malaysia
Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia
July 16, 17 and 18, 2008

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BACKGROUND

Religion-based political movements are not new in the history of social change in Asia. During the colonial period, they played an important role in social work for the emancipation of the people as well as in liberation movement for the national independence. In the postcolonial era, they participated in the nation building through social work as well as political parties. Under the dictatorship or other types of repressive regime, they participated in the opposition and in getting rid of the power. In the democratic era, they participated in national development through diverse ways, including political parties.

Meanwhile, the involvement of religion-based political movements in politics is not accepted by all the people without fear. Certain religion-based political movements have used violent means to defend or impose their political interests. The gender-based discrimination in social, economical and political life is often happened in connection with religious conviction translated into politics.

With the rise of religion-based political movements, social restless increases. Certain religion-based political movements threat social stability and security, at the local as well as national even international levels.

The question is how far religion-based political movements, as a part of the freedom of expression and of association, can be accepted in the framework of democratic society? How is it possible to know whether a religion-based political movement is suitable or not with the people's wish or the national development? What is to be done with the rise of religion-based political movements?

Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been adopted by the General Assembly of UN in 1948, it is clear that every country member of UN is supposed to use the UDHR as a common reference for its national development. The UDHR can therefore be a legitimate reference for answering those questions.

OBJECTIVE AND TARGETS

The workshop is to be organised for two objectives: strengthening the co-operation between civil society organisations in Asia for peace and security, and preparing the Asian contribution for the Asia-Europe People's Forum that will take place in Beijing in October 2008. More precisely, the workshop is to be held for two following targets:

1. Identifying the reasons of the rise of religion-based political movements and their consequences on the national development based on Human Rights, and formulating recommendations on the matter for the actors of development, especially the civil society organisations and the government agencies.
2. Disseminating the result of the workshop to the public through publication.

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

Geographically, the study is to be focused on the countries where there is a chance that religion is to be used as mobilising reference for political movements or where the phenomenon is perceptible. The countries and the religions concerned in Asia are:

1. Bangladesh (Islam)
2. China (Buddhism, Islam)
3. India (Hinduism, Islam)
4. Indonesia (Christianity, Islam)
5. Japan (Buddhism, Shintoism)

6. Korea (Buddhism, Christianity)
7. Malaysia (Islam)
8. Myanmar (Buddhism)
9. Pakistan (Islam)
10. Philippines (Christianity, Islam)
11. Srilanka (Buddhism, Hinduism)
12. Thailand (Buddhism, Islam)

BASIC QUESTIONS

In term of subject of study, the workshop is to be focused on three basic questions around:

1. Historical Perspective

How did religion-based political movements appear? Why? What was their role in national history?

2. State of Affairs

In what way and in what extent the religion-based political movements rise today? Why?

3. Future Perspective

In what sense the religion-based political movements are or are not compatible with the UDHR? What is to be done by civil society organisations and governments with the rise of religion-based political movements?

COORDINATORS AND COORGANISERS

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 06010 Sintok, Kedah
 MALAYSIA
 E-mail: mustafa@uum.edu.my / ishakmustafa@yahoo.com

STEERING COMMITTEE (see APPENDIX 1 for their biodata)

Dr Darwis Khudori (co-ordinator) — Architect and Historian, University of Le Havre and International Network on Development and Civilisation LEBRET-IRFED, France
 Professor Dr Mohamed Mustafa Ishak — Political Scientist, University Utara, Malaysia
 Professor Dr Musdah Mulia — Scholar of Islamic Studies, Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace, Jakarta, Indonesia
 Dr Thaveesak Putsukee — Scholar of Education Sciences, Thaksin University, Songkhla, Thailand
 Dr Albert E. Alejo, S.J. — Priest and Anthropologist, Mindanawon Initiatives for Cultural Dialogues, Ateneo de Davao University, Davao City, Philippines

DATES AND VENUE (see APPENDIX 3 for practical information)

July 16, 17 and 18, 2008
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA
06010 UUM SINTOK
KEDAH DARUL AMAN
MALAYSIA
Tel.: (604) 928 4000 Fax: (604) 928 3016
Web site: <http://www.uum.edu.my> E-mail: prouum@uum.edu.my

PROGRAMME (see APPENDIX 2)**PUBLICATION**

The selected papers are to be published as a book. Some publishers based in Asia are supposed to be interested in publishing the book, such as SIRD (Strategic Information and Research Development, Malaysia).

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The workshop is supposed to be a collective concern of Asian and European people represented by the participants. It is planned therefore that the workshop is to be financed by several institutions concerned by the theme of the workshop. Every Steering Committee member is supposed to find financial support for a part of the budget.

APPENDIX 1: BIODATA OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS
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Dr. Darwis KHUDORI — Indonesia/France

Dr. Darwis Khudori is writer (poems, short stories, novels, essays) and engineer-architect (Gadjah Mada University, 1984). He specialised in Housing and Urban Development Studies (Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies, Rotterdam, 1987 and 1989) and History of Contemporary Arab and Muslim World (doctorate, University of Paris-Sorbonne, 1999). Most of his written works are published in Indonesian, English and French; some are in Dutch. As a socially engaged architect, he participated in the slum upgrading and community development of Kampong Code 1980-1986 (Aga Khan Award for Architecture 1992). He was also co-designer during 1985-1988 for Surabaya University and Monastery of Gedono (Indonesian Architect Association Award 1991). Senior lecturer in Oriental Studies at the Faculty of International Affairs, University of Le Havre, France, since 1995, he is also Director of Master's Degree in International Affairs, specialising in Trade with Asia, at the same faculty, since 2004. Outside his academic activities, he is co-founder and board member of *Yayasan Pondok Rakyat* (People's Shelter Foundation), Yogyakarta (Indonesia), and board member of editors of the International Network Development and Civilisations LEBRET-IRFED, Paris (France). His last publication is a collective work of which he is the editor: *Rethinking Solidarity in Global Society. The Challenge of Globalisation for Social and Solidarity Movements. 50 Years After Bandung Asian-African Conference 1955* (updated edition by SIRD/Malaysia, YPR/Indonesia, FTM/Senegal, CETRI/Belgium, DCLI/France, AAPSO/Egypt, 2007). Websites: http://www.univ-lehavre.fr/enseign/fai/master_asie_gb.php ; <http://www.lebret-irfed.org/> ; <http://www.ypr.or.id/> ; <http://www.bandungspirit.org/> Contact: darwis.khudori@univ-lehavre.fr

Professor Dr. Mohamed Mustafa Ishak — Malaysia

Professor Mohamed Mustafa Ishak is a Professor of Politics and International Studies at the College of Law, Politics and International Studies (COLGIS), University Utara Malaysia (UUM). He has been serving at UUM since 1984 and has had various positions at the university. He has been the Dean of the Faculty of International Studies, Dean of Students Affairs, and had served as the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Students Affairs from 2001-2004. Currently he is the Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies at COLGIS, UUM. His areas of interest are nationalism and ethnic politics, democracy and change in Southeast Asia, sports and politics; and political leadership and development in Southeast Asia. Website: <http://www.uum.edu.my/bi/v1/index2.html> Contact: mustafa@uum.edu.my

Professor Dr. Siti Musdah Mulia — Indonesia

Research Professor of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) since 2003, Dr. Siti Musdah Mulia, M.A., is also lecturer on Islamic Political Thought at the School of Graduate Studies of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, Indonesia. Since 2007, she has been the Chairperson of ICRP (Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace), an NGO promoting interfaith dialogues, pluralism and democracy for peace. She was a Senior Advisor of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2000-2007) and the head of Research Division of the Council of Indonesian Ulema (MUI) (2000-2005). Very active in academic field, she has been an international visiting fellow in a number of universities. Activist for Democracy, Human Rights and Gender Issues, she is also laureate of the International Women of Courage Award from US Government (2007) for her outstanding contribution to the development of moderate Islam and the promotion of democracy and human rights in Indonesia. Contact address: ICRP (Indonesian Conference on Religion for Peace), Jalan Cempaka Putih Barat XXI, No. 34, Jakarta Pusat, INDONESIA. Phone 62-21-42802349 / 42802350 Fax:62-21-4227243. Website: <http://www.icrp-online.org/indexutama.php> E-mail: m-mulia@indo.net.id or icrp@cbn.net.id

Dr. Thaweesak Putsukee — Thailand

Dr. Thaweesak Putsukee is educator and academician with Buddhist cultural and religious background. Born in Yala of southern Thailand, he passed his undergraduate degree in educational sciences from Prince of Songkhla University in Pattani province; obtained a Master's degree and a Ph.D. in Humanities (field of specialization: Education in Socio-Economic Development) from the University of Paris (Sorbonne). Having been engaged in different fields of professional, social, and academic activities since the 1980s (as social worker and activist, lecturer, organizer and collaborator for a number international cooperation programs, including experiences as consultant in human resource and project planning in business sector), he is permanent lecturer and researcher at the Thaksin University (www.tsu.ac.th), which is one among the famous Thailand's southern universities. His numerous writings, in French, English, and Thai, have been focused on human development questions in general. Among these are: *Informal Education and Development* (in French), 1996; *Buddhism and Development* (in French), 1996; *Education, Development, and Change of Women's Status in Thai Society* (in French), 1996; *Education and Democracy* (in French and in Thai); *Education in the Process of Development of Thailand* (in French and in Thai), 1997 and 1999; *Potentials and Limitations of Community-Based Organizations in Rural Development in Thailand*, (in collaboration with CATAD study team sent by the University of Humboldt in Berlin), 1998; *Manual Handbook ICT for Learning Society Enhancement and Community-based Development* (project in a cooperation framework between Thai Government and the European Union), 2007. Contact: thaweesak@tff.or.th or drtp2001@hotmail.com

Dr. Albert E. Alejo, S.J. — Philippines

Dr. Albert E. Alejo, SJ, spearheads the *Ehem! Anticorruption Movement* of the Society of Jesus in the Philippines. He also does pastoral work with the *Amuma Cancer Support Group* which he founded. He served as director of the *Archdiocese of Manila Labor Center* before he did his PHD in Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Among his books are *Sanayan lang ang Pagpatay* (Killing is a Matter of Practice, poetry), *Tao Po! Tuloy! Isang Landas ng Pag-unawa sa Loob ng Tao* (Anybody Home! A Path to the Understanding of Human Interiority, philosophy) and *Generating Energies in Mount Apo: Cultural Politics in a Contested Environment* (anthropology). He has also produced the video-documentary film *Pinakatagong Lihim ng Simbahan* (The Church's Best-Kept Secret) and, more recently, *Ehemplo! Corruption and Integrity in Philippine Society*, as well as music videos such as *Meme na Mindanaw: A Lullaby for Peace*, *Ehemplo! Song of Integrity*, *Bayang May Dangal: Song for National Soul Cleansing*. Fr. Alejo teaches graduate courses in anthropology, philosophy and development studies at the Ateneo de Davao University where he also serves as director of the *Research and Publication Office*, and editor of *Tambara Journal of Social Science and Humanities*. As Chair of the *Mindanaon Initiatives for Cultural Dialogue*, he devotes much of his time in advocacy for indigenous people's rights, Christian-Muslim dialogue. He is currently finishing a book on the spirituality of integrity in public service and preparing to publish his Tagalog translations of mystical poems. Website: <http://www.addu.edu.ph/> Contact: paringbert@yahoo.com

APPENDIX 2: TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

**THE RISE OF RELIGION-BASED
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**University Utara Malaysia
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TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

19:00-21:00: RECEPTION

Welcoming and Introductory Words by the National and International Coordinators
Self-introduction of all the participants

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

08:30-09:00: Registration**09:00-10:00: OPENING SESSION**

Address and Opening Ceremony by the Chancellor of the University Utara Malaysia
Keynote speech

10:00-10:30: COFFEE BREAK**10:30-13:00: STEERING COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS**

Presentation and discussion of the view of every Steering Committee Member on the issue.

Dr. Darwis Khudori (coordinator)
Professor Dr. Mohammed Mustafa Ishak
Professor Dr. Musdah Mulia
Dr. Thaveesak Pustsukee
Dr. Albert E. Alejo

13:00-14:30: LUNCH BREAK**14:30-16:00: COUNTRY REPORTS**

Presentation and discussion of the issue in the context of national development.

Bangladesh
China
India

16:00-16:30: COFFEE BREAK

16:30-18:00: COUNTRY REPORTS

Indonesia
Japan
Korea

Thursday, July 17, 2008

09:00-10:30: COUNTRY REPORTS

Malaysia
Myanmar
Pakistan

10:30-11:00: COFFEE BREAK

11:00-12:30: COUNTRY REPORTS

Philippines
Srilanka
Thailand

12:30-14:00: LUNCH BREAK

14:00-15:30: CASE STUDIES

Presentation and discussion of the case studies of political movement based on religion.

Parallel Session: Case 1 and Case 2
Parallel Session: Case 3 and Case 4
Parallel Session: Case 5 and Case 6

15:30-16:00: COFFEE BREAK

16:00-17:30: COLLECTIVE WORK TOWARDS CONCLUSION

Friday, July 18, 2008

09:00-10:30: COLLECTIVE WORK TOWARDS RECOMMENDATION

10:30-11:00: COFFEE BREAK

11:00-12:00: COLLECTIVE WORK TOWARDS DECLARATION

12:00-12:05: CLOSING CEREMONY

APPENDIX 3: PRACTICAL INFORMATION**GETTING TO UUM**

**UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA
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Malaysia is a federation of states and the UUM belongs to the State of Kedah which capital is Alor Setar. The Sultan Abdul Halim International Airport is located approximately 11km north of Alor Setar and 40km south of UUM campus in Sintok. The campus can be reached from Kuala Lumpur or from Bangkok.

FROM KUALA LUMPUR**BY RAIL**

The Malaysian Railway (KTMB) services major towns in Kedah and Perlis. There are daily train services from Kuala Lumpur to Alor Setar and Arau. From Alor Setar or Arau railway station, you can take a cab to UUM campus. For train schedules, please visit [Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad](#) website.

BY AIR

Malaysia Airlines and Air Asia flies daily from Alor Setar to Kuala Lumpur. From the airport, you can take a cab or bus to UUM campus. For flight schedules, please visit [Malaysia Airlines](#) or [Air Asia](#) website.

BY ROAD

The [North-South Expressway \(PLUS\)](#) has made it easy for any traveler to drive up to [UUM campus](#). Roads are accessible from major towns and cities in the Peninsula. It is a 7-8 hour drive from Kuala Lumpur. From Alor Setar/Jitra or from the nearest town Changlun, one can even take a cab or the local bus, HBR Liner / Kenderaan Bas Mara that goes straight into the UUM campus in Sintok. From major towns, such as Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru, air-conditioned express buses are also available.

FROM BANGKOK**BY AIR**

There is no direct flight from Bangkok to Alor Setar, but daily flights connect Bangkok to Alor Setar through Kuala Lumpur by [Thai Airways](#), [Malaysia Airlines](#) and [Air Asia](#).

BY AIR AND BY ROAD

Alor Setar is geographically not far from Hat Yai, the main city of Southern Thailand. It takes around two hours by car. Daily flights link Bangkok to Hat Yai by [Thai Airways](#), [Air Asia](#), [Nok Air](#), [One-Two-Go](#). Sintok can be reached from Hat Yai by taxi or rented car.