

Intellectual Discourse

Volume 25

Number 2

2017



International Islamic University Malaysia
<http://journals.iium.edu.my/intdiscourse/index.php/islam>

Intellectual Discourse

Volume 25

Number 2

2017

Editor

Ishtiaq Hossain

Book Review Editor

Mohd Helmi

Associate Editors

Saadah Wok

Khairil Izamin bin Ahmad

Anke Iman Bouzenita

Editorial Board

Alparsalan Acikgenc, *Turkey*

Daniel J. Christie, *United States*

Mohamed E. El-Meswai, *Malaysia*

Aimillia Mohd Ramli, *Malaysia*

Serdar Demirel, *Turkey*

Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu, *Nigeria*

Thameem Ushama, *Malaysia*

Ibrahim M. Zein, *Qatar*

Zafar Afaq Ansari, *United States*

Kamada Shigeru, *Japan*

Hazizan Md. Noon, *Malaysia*

Hussin Mutalib, *Singapore*

Kenneth Christie, *Canada*

James D. Frankel, *China*

Serdar Demirel, *Turkey*

Badri Najib Zubir, *Malaysia*

International Advisory Board

Jonathan A. C. Brown, *United States*

Muhammad K. Khalifa, *Qatar*

Chandra Muzaffar, *Malaysia*

M. Zakyi Ibrahim, *United States*

Redzuan Othman, *Malaysia*

Anis Malik Thoah, *Indonesia*

John O. Voll, *United States*

Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Pakistan*

Intellectual Discourse is a highly respected, academic refereed journal of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). It is published twice a year by the IIUM Press, IIUM, and contains reflections, articles, research notes and review articles representing the disciplines, methods and viewpoints of the Muslim world.

Intellectual Discourse is abstracted in *SCOPUS*, *ProQuest*, *International Political Science Abstracts*, *Peace Research Abstracts Journal*, *Muslim World Book Review*, *Bibliography of Asian Studies*, *Index Islamicus*, *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, *ATLA Religion Database*, *MyCite*, *ISC* and *EBSCO*.

ISSN 0128-4878 (Print); ISSN 2289-5639 (Online)

<http://journals.iium.edu.my/intdiscourse/index.php/islam>

Email: intdiscourse@iium.edu.my; intdiscourse@yahoo.com

Published by:

IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia

P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Phone (+603) 6196-5014, Fax: (+603) 6196-6298

Website: <http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop>

Printed by:

Workline Systems Sdn. Bhd.

37-1(1st Floor), Jalan Setiawangsa 11A

54200 Taman Setiawangsa, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Conference Report

International Conference on Forced Migration and Refugee Studies: Issues and Shifting Paradigms, 5-7 December, 2017 (Tuesday-Thursday) 17-19 Rabi al-Awwal 1439

The world is currently facing its biggest refugee crisis since the end of World War II. According to the UN refugee agency a record 65.6 million people are either refugees, asylum seekers or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The world witnessed an unending stream of refugees fleeing the violence in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan to Europe. In the meantime, thousands of illegal migrants, mostly from the West African region, continue to try to reach the shores of Europe. Many of these migrants, while trying to reach Europe, have drowned in the Mediterranean. Recently videos have appeared in the international media showing auction of human beings as slaves.

Southeast Asian countries have their share of refugees. Following the end of the Indochinese war in 1975, thousands of people, known as the ‘Boat People’, reached the shores of Southeast Asian states seeking shelter. Most of these refugees were later re-settled in Australia, Canada, and the United States. Since then whenever any neighbouring state suffer from domestic political turmoil, Southeast Asian states would be hit by waves of refugees seeking shelter. In this context mention must be made of the plight of the Rohingya Muslim refugees fleeing the brutal crackdown by Myanmar’s military. It has been happening since the 1990s. In particular, the waves of Rohingya Muslims escaping Myanmar in 2012, 2015, and 2017 are noteworthy. In 2017, nearly 600,000 of Rohingya Muslims fled to neighbouring Bangladesh. The brutal treatment of these hapless people by Myanmar’s military forces brought world-wide condemnation. International media’s focus on the Rohingyas helped highlight their plight. Among the ASEAN states, Malaysia was forthright in taking a strong stand on the question of treatment of the Rohingyas.

Given the current context, it was timely that the International Islamic University Malaysia organised an international conference titled “International Conference on Forced Migration and Refugee Studies: Issues and Shifting Paradigms”. It was held on 5-7 December, 2017, at IIUM’s picturesque Gombak campus. It was a privilege for the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS) to organise the conference on behalf of the IIUM.

While refugee studies have caught on in the Western countries, the Muslim scholars are also not lagging behind. More should be done in this regards. This point is well emphasised by the Honourable Rector of the IIUM. In a message to the conference Honourable Rector of the IIUM Prof. Dato’ Sri Dr. Zaleha Kamaruddin, pointed out, “Given this situation, it is time that Muslim scholars and intellectuals rethink the issue in order to offer and provide solutions to the ever pressing forced migration and refugee problem. While it is true that active political and diplomatic interventions are needed and are more effective in resolving such problems, scholars and intellectuals have a responsibility as well to look into the root causes of the issue and hopefully by doing so, solutions or remedies would be found. It may take a long while to bring about any satisfactory changes, but at least we continue to persevere in the ways we know best.”

In another message, Prof. Dr. Mohammad A. Quayum, Dean, KIRKHS, IIUM, aptly points out the need for the academics and scholars to discuss and carry out research on the key issues affecting the refugees in the following way, “It is true that activist intervention is highly needed in coping with this problem, but what is equally important is the pressing need for new conceptual tools and empirical data that can help us think more clearly and systematically about this issue. This conference, therefore, is intended to be a platform for both scholars and activists to exchange their views on this problem, and thus help us to come out with potential solutions to this refugee crisis.” One of the aims of this conference was to, as Assoc Prof Dr. Arshad Islam, the conference Chairman, pointed out in his message, “This Conference explores the possibility of ‘alternative interpretations’.”

The conference was attended by paper presenters and participants from Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Turkey and international scholars from Algeria,

Myanmar, Nigeria and Tunisia at IIUM were present at the conference. A total of number of 49 papers were presented at 16 clusters (sessions) spread over two days (December 5 and 6). The third day (December 7) was devoted to a tour of Kuala Lumpur, Shah Alam and Putra Jaya. The keynote speech was given by Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri, Professor of History, Delhi University, India. He provided an in-depth but easy to understand rundown of history of refugees. He referred to the plight of Rohingya, and the Syrian refugees who are languishing in refugee camps. He lamented the fact that they are living in miserable condition. He rightly points out that while “the international community has all the sympathy for these refugees, but they are unable to do anything effective to ameliorate their plight.” Professor Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri reminded the new generation of academics and scholars gathered at the conference of the “greatest migration of history” that accompanied the creation of India and Pakistan in 1947. In his keynote speech, Professor Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri also bemoaned the use of plight of Bengali refugees as propaganda tool by the government of India. He concluded rather optimistically by stating that “We, now, in the 21st century, can say with confidence that we possess a shared past vis-à-vis these experiences, and we can learn much from our ‘historical legacies’ to tackle as well as to understand some of the Contemporary issues in our politics and society in a better way.”

The themes of papers presented at the conference ranged from “Migration Origins and the Process of Nation Building in Malaysia: The Dilemma between Malay Nationalism and Malaysian Citizenship” to “The Position of Climate Change Refugees under International Refugee Law.” The Rohingya and the Syrian refugee issues were covered by quite a number of papers presented at the conference.

The discussions made at the conference were intellectual, and civil in nature. It is hoped that the proceedings of the conference would be published as soon as possible. At the end of the conference, a statement was adopted. With regard to the Rohingya issue, the statement argued that it was high time that the Muslim nations collectively put pressure on the international agencies to effectively take up the matter with the government of Myanmar as settlement and repatriation of the Rohingyas is the only long-term solution to the problem.

Ishtiaq Hossain

In This Issue

Editorial

Articles

Rahmah bt. Ahmad H. Osman & Abdullah Mekki

The Tiger and the Terrorist: How Malaysian NGOs deal with Terrorism

Syaza Farhana Mohamad Shukri

The Role of Ethnic Politics in Promoting Democratic Governance: A Case Study of Malaysia

Muneer Kuttiyani Muhammad & Adibah Abdul Rahim

The Principle of Wasaṭiyyah as a Higher Objective of the Sharī'ah: A Historical Survey

Majdan Alias and Mohd. Noh Abdul Jalil

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Mas'ūdī on Pre-Islamic Arab Religions and Beliefs

Abdulla Galadari

Creatio Ex Nihilo and the Literal Qur'ān

Hassan Sheikh Ali, Danial Azman, & Roy Anthony Rogers

Before Things Fall Apart: The Role of the Soviet Union in Somalia's Troubled Past (1969-1978)

Book Reviews

Conference Report

ISSN 0128-4878 (Print)

ISSN 2289-5639 (Online)

