

Conference Reports

Peace and Conflict Studies

The two-day seminar on Peace and Conflict Studies, held at the International Islamic of Malaysia (IIUM), Gombak, Malaysia on 24 and 25 February 2011, was organized by the Centre for Human Development and Applied Social Sciences (CERDAS) together with the Department of Psychology and the Department of Political Science, the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS), IIUM. The seminar was officiated by Professor Syed Arabi Idid, the then Rector of IIUM.

The seminar brought together leading academicians, scholars, activists and students from IIUM and other institutions of higher learning. Around 150 participants attended the seminar. At the seminar, peace was commonly understood as the absence of hostility, well-being in matters of social or economic welfare, the acknowledgment of equality, and fairness in political relationships.

Four well-known speakers (Professors Daniel Christie, Khoo Kay Kim, K.S. Nathan and Datuk Denison Jayasooria) delivered their respective speeches on peace psychology, conflict and security issues in the making of Malaysia's foreign policy, leadership in peace at the ASEAN level and prejudice, discrimination and conflict at the interethnic relations. The speakers expressed support for prevention of conflict, conflict resolution and described peace as an element that operates to keep harmoniously situation in the society.

There were other speakers who dwelt on different themes of the seminar. Wahabuddin Ra'ees, El-Fatih Abdullahi Abdel Salam, Noraini M. Noor and Ishtiaq Hossain deliberated on issues of conflict, social justice and coercive diplomacy in promoting peace and preventing conflict within and between societies. Tunku Mohar Tunku Mohamad Mokhtar, Hariyati Shahrma Abdul Majid and Abdul Rashid Moten contributed to issues specifically focusing on

disaster, covering a spectrum of views from the belief that international disputes can and should be peacefully resolved, structural mechanism attending violent and non-violent social conflicts, as well as achieving inner peace through interpersonal or international relationships.

The paper presenters exchanged ideas on conflict resolution and the peace processes, touching on the recent conflict situations in Egypt, Libya and Bahrain as well as the past conflicts in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Pakistan and Sudan. Furthermore, the practical experiences were also shared during the seminar which had helped to serve the aim of maintaining the academic and practical relevance on peace issue, in particular to build peaceful and equitable forms of social coexistence.

Paper presenters also highlighted the efforts made by Muslim activists to change the image of Islam by reintroducing it to the Western society as a religion that calls for peace and rejects violence. One of the approaches suggested in the seminar was to emphasize that Islam is all for peace and that the term Islam itself means Peace.

The seminar had some immediate aims like creating awareness on peace and conflict issues, promoting network among researchers and practitioners, and the university co-operation on peace and conflict, which were achieved towards the end of the seminar.

Moving beyond this seminar is to ensure that the Seminar on Peace and Conflict Studies would be held regularly; a programme on Peace and Conflict Studies would be developed and offered; and finally a serious thought would be given on the establishment of the Centre for Peace Studies.

Selvaraj Ramasamy & R. Suresh Kumar
Department of Political Science