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Who Should be the Agent of Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin?

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The essence of education is to profoundly grasp and implement the concept of mercy, compassion, and benevolence to all people and the whole universe, an attribute described in the Qur'an as *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* (Mercy to all).

From the inception of man's creation, he had been religiously and intellectually empowered by his Creator through the guidance of the office of prophethood and the discourse of authoritative scholars and intellectuals to institutionalise the meaning of mercy and compassion to all people and the whole universe. The various stages of man's life had been endowed with a living example of the succeeding prophets to render, show, and radiate mercy to all, including his surroundings.

If the cream of human civilisation, the golden age of Islam, has gained respect from other civilisations, it had been possible because of safeguarding and preserving the universal values that brought Muslims, Christians, Jews, and other adherents of religions to live in peace, diversity, and harmony in this universe.

The principle of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* has widened the door of inclusiveness and hospitality of both the houses of royalty and commoners in various parts of the Muslim world in which, other societies for the past centuries have patterned the relationship between the state and the people.

We may regard it as miseducation to label the true custodians of *Rahmatan lil Alamin* with attributes that are inconsistent with the worldview and philosophy of their religion and culture. It is a misnomer to equate the principle of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* with hate, discrimination among people, and disrespect to the environment.

Muslim academics and organisations in the region, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia, have been actively involved in promoting the concept *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* model as it is derived from the universal teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Aware of its relevance to the global communities, the Majlis Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan (MAIWP), the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM) and its counterparts in Indonesia and other Muslim NGOs, religious and academic organisations in the region have been obliged to explain the concept of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* by engaging both local universities and top world universities including Harvard, Berkeley, Stanford, and Columbia.

To capture the attention of scientific communities at the global level, it was necessary to engage the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries with a special task to create momentum, and thus lead the way towards the realisation of the cardinal principle of mercy to all creations. Going global to strengthen the wings of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* has not only captured the attention of the academics but also resounded the readiness of many ambassadors from European Union countries, suggesting the urgency for the revival of the discourse that may revitalise the true meaning of inter-religious or interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) is globally recognised for its strong advocacy towards the promotion of the universal values of loving and compassion among mankind as well as God's creatures. The diversity of the programmes, staff, and students of the campus truly defined what the 'Garden of Knowledge and Virtue' means and its implications to the concept of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin*.

The series of seminars organised by IIUM in collaborations with other prominent Muslim organisations like the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) and others have provided important resolutions that could serve as guidelines for the ASEAN nations and leading universities in the region towards protecting and preserving the social order of communities and ensure their well-being.

It is therefore, the responsibility of the entire populace of the world community to understand and implement the wisdom of the principle of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* to safeguard humanity's faith, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth and to attain a productive mutual relationship with the entire cosmos so that the culture of peace and sustainable development will prevail as shared common values of both western and non-western communities.

Everything that causes the abandonment of the inherent rights of humanity and the environment or cosmos should be regarded as *mafsadah* or destructive that must be dealt with by responsible world leaders and academics at the highest level of diplomacy to attain the core principle of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* amid the era of religious and cultural pluralism.

Given the present geopolitical condition of the world, it is indeed time to educate the mind and soul that the destruction or collapse of the concept *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* would precipitate chaos and the demise of the standard of the order of both advanced and developing societies. Inviting everyone towards the discourse would encourage the pursuit of knowledge and education to warrant people's intellectual empowerment and the advancement of ethics, arts, sciences, and civilisation.

Certainly, popularising the discourse of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* is not confined to producing authoritative legal experts to derive policies and rulings that are devoid of practical measurements and methodologies that could be seen by the rest of the world as the ultimate solutions to the contemporary problems faced by the entire humanity and the environment. University students, particularly the Muslim youth, should be made aware of the fact that the *Maqasid Al Shari'ah* stands as one of the legal sources that provide a clear framework and guidance to the process of solving the issues whilst conforming to the human interest and complying with the will of God.

Meanwhile, the weekly intellectual discourse of Ranao Council Incorporated, a prominent group of academics at Mindanao State University, Marawi City, Philippines have shown their interest in promoting the principle of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* along with the university's mandates of cultural integration and national solidarity via education.

Dr. Mohammed Farid Ali Al-Fijawi, an assistant professor of AHAS KIRKHS, IIUM at the Department Fiqh and Usul was invited by the Ranao Council to deliver an introductory lecture of his books entitled "Forty Hadith on Leading the Way". He highlighted in his discussion about the four cardinal principles of "Leading the Way", the tagline of IIUM leadership: *Khalifah* (Stewardship), *Amanah* (Trust), *Iqra* (Knowledge), and *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* (Mercy for the world).

He also underlined that by acculturating these principles, leaders (e.g. educational leaders) can empower people, preserve the planet, build prosperity, and foster peace. He argued that the forty *hadith* collection concerning four cardinal principles will provide an intellectual window to profoundly understand the vast realm of leadership and societal transformation in our respective communities.

Dr. Farid responded to a few questions posed by the participants by encapsulating the Quranic term *Khalifah* with other related concepts like leadership and mercy to all created beings. He elucidated that *Khalifah* must be understood to maintain justice in every aspect of man's existence as a spiritual and a physical being by avoiding injustice, easing life on earth, warning against deceiving the subjects, enjoining good, and forbidding evil.

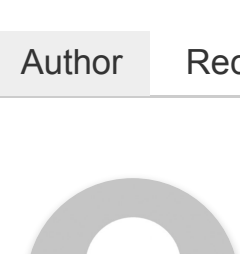
In addition, Dr. Farid examined the reality that Muslim ummah is currently facing. He also argued that there will be consequences of abandoning 'enjoining good, and forbidding evil'. Responding to the question about the current development in Afghanistan, Dr. Farid articulated that Islam is not confined to spirituality or Islamic rituals alone. He added that Islam is a dynamic religion that many observers have failed to grasp, particularly the western media.

Islam promotes the development of *Muamalat* (i.e. Islamic rulings governing transactions e.g. commercial transactions) to foster peace, cooperation, and harmony at the individual, social, and civilisational level.

On the question about the environment, Dr. Farid put a strong emphasis that the culture of *iqra* (knowledge) must be preserved, protected, and developed to produce *insan sejahterah* (holistic human being/ universal man or *insan al kamil*). The Qur'anic man must play an active role in maintaining the environment because such act is a charity, removing harm is charity, cultivating is better than abandoning the lands, protection of life, honour, and property.

Given the permission, authority, or license to transmit a *hadith* directly linked with the *sanad* (i.e. chain of narration which verifies the legitimacy of the *hadith*) to the Prophet (saw) through the *Ijazah* given by Dr. Farid is the most important highlight of the programme. The *hadith* is related to the fourth cardinal principle of leadership in Islam, which is *Rahmatan Lil Alamin* (Mercy for the world). Allah's Messenger said, "Allah will not be merciful to those who are not merciful to mankind." ***

(Dr. Alizaman Dumangcag Gamon is an academic in the Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies, AHAS KIRKHS, and Dr. Mariam Saidona Tagaranoo is an academic at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM). The views expressed here are those of the authors/contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of IIUMToday.)

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