

# CENTRIS E-BULLETIN

The official bulletin of CENTRIS, IIUM

JULY-AUGUST 2025 VOL. 10

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CENTRIS E-bulletin is published bimonthly  
(bimestrial).



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# Disagree to Agree

In the previous volume, we talked about the importance of having a “big” heart or being democratic by agreeing to disagree in intellectual discussions. This guideline must be applied to other types of conversations too, especially in matters related to societal governance, e.g. Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action, where a vibrant public sphere that allows free value-based communication is the prerequisite for a democratic polity. Nonetheless, in such a Habermasian approach to communication, we, i.e. Muslims, must also remind ourselves not to give up our stance throughout the communication process. While we allow others to speak up their mind, we must also not give up our principles, especially those related to our Islamic creed, faith and teachings.

Such stances are vital as they will ensure that we will not dilute our objective in Islam, which is to be steadfast in our *da’wah* for the improvement of society. However, in today’s hegemonic liberal democratic system, even though it stresses that freedom of speech, thought and religion are its utmost ethos, ironically always there will be instances when these so-called advocates of freedoms start to reverse such principles or retreat from what they have been championing. This paradox of “not to tolerate the intolerant” proves that the liberals, eventually at one point, will not tolerate the views of others who refused to “tolerate” their stances. For example, when Muslims refused to adopt the principle of not interfering in a person’s private matters, they would be accused of infringing the “universal” liberal principle of individual liberty. However, in Islam, Muslims are taught to seriously do *da’wah*, and thus would involve guiding and advising others as much as they could to the right path and to correct or prohibit whenever they see something that is not in line with Islamic teachings. This is because in Islam, religion is not a private matter.

Therefore, it is vital for the advocates of liberal democracy to recognize that, in certain aspects, they should not try to generalize and impose their principles on others. What is more, such impositions are defeating the purpose of liberalism itself and may turn themselves into authoritarians that they have been trying to get rid of.



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eISSN 2811-342X



9 772811 342006