

# Islamophobia: Is it a Humanity Issue?

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**Abstract**—Islam is religion dibawa by Prophet Muhammad b.p.u.h. Eventhough Islam declare the peaceful and harmony, some of the society phobia towards Islam. They feel uneasy with Islam. They feel anxiety and afraid of Islam. They phobia to Islam in many ways. For example, Gottschalk & Gabriel Greenberg (2008) wrote in his book *Islamophobia making muslims the enemy* how some symbols affect the phobia to Islam. Some characters of muslims and certain concepts in Islam create the phobia. People talk about humanity when there are child abuse, women abuse, victims in war and others. But, we didn't notice that islamophobia is also a humanity issue. From the literature review about this topic, the researcher gives the comments, suggests and gives ideas about the islamophobia as a humanity issue.

**Keywords**—Humanity, Islamophobia, muslims' issue, phobia

## I. INTRODUCTION

ISLAM is a religion releaved by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad b.p.u.h to preach to all humankind. Islam is an Arabic word. The root word of Islam is *س ل م*. Many different word comes from this root word. The meaning can be peaceful, harmony, submission or surrender. Eventhough Islam declare peace and safety, some of the society especially non-muslims phobia towards Islam. They feel uneasy with Islam. They feel anxiety and afraid of Islam. The discussion of this topic is mostly refer to Malaysia and generally to all society in this world.

## II. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND THE OBJECTIVES

Two to three years lately, Malaysians was shocked by the bad news involved insinuation non-muslims towards muslims and Islam. Non-muslims tried to raised certain issues in order to make muslims angry. The cases become increasing and spreading widely all over the states in Malaysia. The main reason of the cases happen is because that group dislike Islam, afraid of Islam and feel anxiety towards Islam. They afraid Islam become a famous and favourite way of life. Therefore by doing the insinuation, they think they can drop Islam down, they can demotivate muslims and the can destroy Islam. Based on that issues, the writer tries to discuss and open to the floor to criticise it. The objectives of the paper is to clarify the islamofobia issue as a humanity issue. The related society have the right to voice out and correct the situation in order to maintain the harmonious inter religions in the country.

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## III. WHAT IS ISLAMOPHOBIA?

Literal meaning of islamophobia is fear to Islam or afraid of Islam. It also relates to anti-Islam or anti-muslim [1]. But according to one of the responden from Sweden, he said there is slightly defferent between anti-Islam and anti-muslim and some times both are same beacuse Islam is conveyed and carried out by muslims [2]. Zulkifli added that islamophobia is fear to religion itself (Islam), muslims and the culture in Islam [3]. The writer has another view regarding the issue of islamophobia. Islamophobia and muslimophobia are two different things. Islam is a fixed religion, unchanging teaching unless in certain insisted cases. While muslims are human being who always changing in attitudde. Sometimes follow the Islamic teaching and vice versa. Nevertheless, both have strong relationship which Islam. Islam is conveyed to all people that we call muslims, regardless of race, colour of skin or state. It is universal and holistic.

Runnymede Trust said that islamophobia was reportedly for the first time in the late 80th in the United States [4]. While it was used in printing in February 1991. Later in March 1997, it began to appear in the Oxford Dictionary. And the term is used extensively in the late of 90th [5].

Islamophobia can be viewed from many aspects of definitions. Runnymede Trust gave the concept of islamophobia as "an unfounded hostility towards the Islam". Chris Allen & Jorgen Nielsen defined it as a scary situation to Islam locally and globally [6]. While, Heitmeyer & Zick conceptualised it as "a form of group oriented enmity and a general attitude of rejection of muslims and all religious symbols and ritual that stem from the Islam" [7]. All of them agreed this term is more particular after the event of 11th September.

## IV. THE PATTERNS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

The patterns of phobia towards Islam are various. For example, Gottschalk & Gabriel Greenberg wrote in his book *Islamophobia making muslims the enemy* how some symbols affect the phobia towards Islam [8]. Besides that, the characters of muslims and the certain concepts in Islam are also create the phobia among them. Oius & Roald reported that in United States and Europeans, both experience so much in the using of symbols especilly related to Islam and muslims. By the way, the patterns and the forms of islamophobia is actually different depend on political and economical impact to the country.

Wearing veil among the muslim women makes people afraid of them. More than that, they are considered as uncivilized [9]. The turban is another symbol of fear. According to R. D'Amora, serban in Turkey perceived as the symbol of the 'Turk' but in the west, it is considered as an enemy [10]. The long dressing worn by male or female muslim sometimes makes them afraid and tried to avoid. Another symbol is the mosque. The mosque for muslims is a place for communal prayer. It is the place to get peacefulness, safety and slavery. In December 2004, Tsunami has destroyed totally all the wealth including buildings mostly at the coast of Southeast Asia. The worst place was Aceh and North Sumatera in Indonesia. But then, with the God's power, the miracle, Tsunami's waves didn't affect about 27 mosques. Even the slight glass of windows didn't crack. And every muslim stayed in the mosque survived [11]. In the history of Islam, mosque is the first building directed by Muhammad pbuh to be established. This is one of the reasons why some people phobia to the symbol of the mosque. It seems like all the islamic symbols have power. They forgot the real power is from 'Allah'.

#### V. ISLAMOPHOBIA IN MALAYSIA

Islamophobia in Malaysia is not as serious as in western. It is because the majority of Malaysians are muslims. But, there are still happen here and there unsatisfied with Islam either from muslims or non-muslims. In the context of Malaysia, the cases happen such as uploading the photograph welcoming to break fast in Ramadhan with pork dish (bak kut teh), claims using the word of 'Allah' in the church by christians and Organizing Programme 'I Want To Touch a Dog'.

The first case happen in July 2013 during Ramadhan (fasting month for muslims) [12]. A chinese couple, Alvin and Vivian uploaded a photograph of themselves eating bak kut teh, a pork dish, with the greeting, "Selamat Berbuka Puasa with bak kut teh, stated the word "fragrant, delicious and appetising". Together with it, they put the 'halal' logo. In Malaysia, The halal logo is labelled on the products that have obtained the Malaysian Halal Authentic Ation Certificate. It is under Department of Malaysian Islamic Development (JAKIM) together with the State Islamic Religious Councils (MAIN) and State Islamic Religious Departments (JAIN). Alvin and Vivian's action raised the anger of muslims. Malaysians are very sure both are knowledgeable that muslims cannot eat all kinds of food based on pork. But why this phenomena still loaded up. For sure their action is purposely to insult muslims. Especially They wrote "Saya Hina Agama Islam (I Insulted Islam)" on his body [13]. From the writer point of view, those who insult muslims by raising up the sensitive issues are actually because they phobia to Islam. They afraid Islam become strong and influential. Therefore, they show their hatred, dislike and uneasy feeling to Islam through irrational and stupid action.

The second issue was Claiming the using word of 'Allah' refer to the God in the Church. This claim happened since few years ago. In the year of 2013 and 2014, this issue raised again. Whatever the reasons given by the claimed group, the writer doesn't want to elaborate this issue but tries to relate

with the phobia towards Islam. We all understood that the word 'Allah' is a term which was used for the supreme God since jahiliyyah period, before the revelation of Islam [14]. Historically, the Arabs people in the middle east muslims and non-muslims used widely the word Allah without any harm [15]. But it is very different situation in Malaysia. The Malaysian muslims are very sensitive and too caring with the religion. For them the word Allah is very great and special, used only for muslims and cannot share with others. The survey done by Azizah supported the muslims right. All the interviewees (non-muslims) agree with the protest from muslims for sharing the word Allah. They said that every religion has his own special name for the God [16]. The government claimed that if the other religions use the same term, that could confuse muslims. Moreover it lead them to convert away from Islam. Some of the muslim scholars view there is a hidden agenda. For the writer, this claim happen just because the followers of other religions feel uneasy with Islam. They afraid of spreading and preaching of Islam. So, to cover their phobia towards Islam, they claim to use the same term refer to God in order to confuse muslims. Hence, muslims facing difficulties in preaching Islam.

The next case was happen just two months ago in October 22nd, 2014. The Non Government Organization (NGO) was organizing the programme "I Want to Touch a Dog" in Bandar Utama Kuala Lumpur. The purposes of the programme were to expose about canines and become familiar with the animals, which are a source of fear for many Malaysians. The festival attracted hundreds of dog owners, animal lovers and those genuinely wanting to overcome their fear of dogs. Unfortunately, the event has now degenerated into an angry war of words replete with complaints, warnings and threats of punishment. The organizer represented by Syed Azmi Alhabshi who claim as a muslim apologized to all muslims. He actually should think carefully before launch any sensitive events especially related to the teaching of Islam. The fact that touching dog without any insisted purpose is officially haram. The muslims can own dogs for the purpose of security, hunting, as working animals and other functions. Partly because of a worsening national crime wave [17]. PERKASA viewed the festival "touch a dog" as a tornadoes comes to Malaysia [18]. According to one of muslim leader, this event actually insults clerics and muslims as a whole. He was urged not to try create a culture that is opposite to Islam. Some of the muslim scholars view that dog-familiarization event was part of certain agenda to avoid Muslim-Malaysians from the teaching of Islam through subtle measures. The writer agree with that statement and again relate that issue with the phobia towards Islam. The organizer, eventhough a muslim, hate Islam which prevent from touching the dog without any purpose. So, to release his hatred or his phobia to Islam, he tried to break the custom by doing the wrong way. And we must remember that in Islam intentions do not justify the means.

#### VI. IS IT A HUMANITY ISSUE?

Talk about humanity, our mind will always imagine the child abuse, women abuse, victims in war, starvation and

others. According to United Nation Human Rights, there are many types of rights which come from the effect of humanity issues. For instance the right to health if there are the health problems, the right to education if segregate disability children from mainstream school and the right at work if fail to provide comfortable and systematic place to the workers [19]. How about the issue of islamophobia? Is there any rights regarding to the religion? Islamophobia is also a humanity issue because Islam has been violated. In Malaysia, there are laws under certain Acts and Sections which protect the right of the religion.

Islam or muslim is attacked everywhere. Islam or muslim is hated here and there. The opponant always insinuate Islam or muslim in various aspects. What should we call to this situation? Muslims must defend their right. Therefore, in Malaysia there are certain Acts drafted for the sake of Islam. For example Syariah Criminal Offences Act (Act 559) (federal territories) 1997, Part III is about the criminals related to the sanctity of Islam and its institutions. Other than that, there are another Sections drafted relate either insulting Islam and muslim or cause despised. Section 7 states:

Any person who orally or in writing or by visible representation or in any other manner-

- (a) insults or brings into contempt the religion of Islam;
- (b) derides, apes or ridicules the practices or ceremonies relating to the religion of Islam; or
- (c) degrades or brings into contempt any law relating to the religion of Islam for the time being in force in the Federal Territories [20],

While, Section 298A is reproduced below:

Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representations, or by any act, ctivity or conduct, or by organizing, promoting or arranging, or assisting in organizing, promoting or arranging, any activity, or otherwise in any other manner : causes, or attempts to cause, or is likely to cause disharmony, disunity, or feelings of enmity, hatred or illwill [21];

Other than Malaysia, there is an organization known as Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC), established in 1997 based in London. The function of IHRC is to help individuals with discrimination cases involving islamophobia and anti-msulim racism. In 2007, this organization has consultative status with United Nations Department of Economic and Sosial Affairs [22].

## VII. CONCLUSION

Every problem has a solution. The first thing we need to identify is factors of the problem. Islamophobia was indentified caused of misunderstanding, lack of knowledge or refuse to understand Islam by certain groups. Therefore, these factors need to be reduced. The muslims have to play their role to recover the issue. All types of communities should be explained drastically and effectively about the real issues of islamophobia based in order to avoid this issue continously happen in Malaysia or it will become worsens. The rights of

religion in Malaysia should be clear. At the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization and at the Asia-Europe Summit (ASEM) in Brussels Eighth beginning of October 2013, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato 'Sri Najib Tun Abdul Razak, urged the world to take the middle path or moderation (Wasatiyyah), the path of peace. He also stressed that a Wasatiyyah is a simple way to be practised. He invited the whole world to get back into being a rational and civilized, avoiding any extreme measures to escape from the extremists who seem born for everywhere in the world. Islamophobia removes the moral values of humanity and far from human civilization [23].

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