

# GENESIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF A “NON-PARTISAN” POLITICAL ACTOR: The Formation of the *Jama’ah Islah Malaysia* (JIM) and its Roots in Western Europe

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## Abstract

*This paper looks at the genesis and development of the Jama’ah Islah Malaysia (JIM), a modernist-reformist Islamist organisation that today has played a vital and visible role in the political landscape of Malaysian politics. Little is known about the early genesis of JIM, and how it began in the 1970s and 1980s as a student-based cadre organisation, created by Malaysian Muslim students studying abroad in Europe and North America. JIM’s roots therefore lie in the Islamic Representative Council (IRC) that was a semi-underground student-cadre movement that was created outside Malaysia, and which aimed to bring about the Islamisation of Malaysian society through the process of social and political mobilisation. Working through the archives of JIM today and interviewing the founder-members of JIM and the IRC, this paper is the first historical account of the formation and development of IRC and JIM to be published.*

**Keywords:** Jama’ah Islah Malaysia, political actor, student movement

## A. Introduction

The Jama’ah Islah Malaysia (JIM) is among the most prominent Islamic NGOs in contemporary Malaysia. With more than 10,000 members spread all around the country, its activities range from social welfare, education to proselytism (*dakwah*). According to its own

constitution this organization is not supposed to take a part in any political activities and officially remains as an Islamic welfare society. Nonetheless JIM's Islamist agenda has been clearly expressed since its official registration in 1990.

In reality, JIM's political ambition has been completely outlined abroad (mostly in the UK and Egypt) in the 1970's by the leaders of Malaysian students' organizations referred in the UK as the Islamic Representative council (IRC). Since the return of this generation of foreign trained students in the 1980's, their involvement in the Islamist reformist movement of Malaysia has been an essential and controversial part of the political and civil society scene.

This paper will present the history of JIM and focus on its political role from the 70's to the *Reformasi* era. The aim is to show how, for more than 30 years, a "non-partisan" political actor has been able to inspire political change, to shape political leaders, to develop and to maintain its key position as a third party between political parties and Malaysian society throughout the country's political history.

This paper is in fact the first academic research conducted on this organisation that remains unknown by the public and the academia. The fact that the organisation was created by a small and close intellectual circle explains the reason why it had always been elitist in term of membership and secretive in its action during the first 10 years of its political. Nevertheless the organisation is very well known by other politicians or activist and from the people who benefit its welfare activities.

## **B. JIM and its Development in Malaysia and Abroad**

Today Malaysia's civil society space is being contested by a wide range of Islamist and Islamic NGOs and social movements that are relatively new on the scene. Up to the 1990s, it was assumed that Malaysian civil society would be dominated by local civil society NGOs like Aliran, Suaram, Hakam, JUST as well as internationally-linked NGOs like Amnesty International. For more than three decades the defining character of Malaysian civil society was that it was dominated by secular and western-educated urban middle-classed professionals and activists, many of whom had enjoyed some degree of higher

education in Malaysia or abroad.

Over the past few years however, and particularly during the period of rule under former Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (2004-2009) Malaysian civil society has become more contested as a result of a wide range of new issues, many of which touched on sensitive subjects such as freedom of religion, speech and political affiliation. Local Malaysian commentators have begun to notice the rise of new Malay-Muslim NGOs and social movements such as Teras, Prowaris and Pekida that have made their opinions known in the public sphere, particularly over issues that touch on the status of the Malay community and the role of Islam in the governance of the country.<sup>1</sup>

While many of these new Malay-Muslim NGOs have presented themselves as defenders of Malay-Muslim communal interests, few analysts and researchers have tried to look at the longer historical ties that link some of the Islamist movements of Malaysia today to the developments of the 1960s and 1970s. This gives the mistaken impression that what we are seeing today is a new phenomenon, when the fact is that many of the current Islamist/Islamic movements in Malaysia have a longer and more complex history.

The aim of this paper is to look at one Muslim NGO that has such a complex history and how this movement first came to be created among a group of Malaysian Muslim students who were studying in the West in the 1970s. The focus of this paper will be on the *Jama'ah Islah Malaysia* (JIM) that has now been formally registered as a legal organisation that remains politically 'neutral' and 'non-partisan' on its own terms. It will look at how this group first began as a semi-underground network of Malaysian Muslim students who were based in Europe, and how over the course of the past four decades it has transformed itself into a legal organisation that openly declares its intention to work towards the Islamisation of Malaysian society.

The paper will end with some conclusions about JIM's role in the Islamisation process of Malaysia, and what role and place it has to play today in the middle of Malaysia's political domain and civil society

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<sup>1</sup> See: Shahnouk Shah, The Rise of Muslim NGOs, in: <http://www.thenutgraph.com/rise-of-muslim-ngos>

space. With the return to race-based and religion-based communitarian politics in Malaysia, can an Islamist movement like JIM maintain its identity as an ideology-based Islamist movement dedicated to Islamisation while also rejected the claims of racial and ethnic politics? Or will JIM finally be marginalised by the rise of new race-based social movements in Malaysia, which may indicate the end or failure of ideological non-racial Islam in the country?

*1. The Formation of the Student-based Islamic Representative Council (IRC) in the 1970s: A prelude to JIM*

Following the inter-racial riots between the Malays and Chinese in Malaysia in May 1969, the Malaysian government was forced to take steps to elevate the economic, material and educational status of the Malay-Muslim majority population in order to strengthen the support for the ruling Malay-based UMNO party. In 1972, the Malaysian government under the leadership of Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak started to send young Malaysians to study abroad as part of its new economic development policy. The NEP (New Economic Policy) was introduced in 1970 and was in fact a set of special measures and rights designed to enhance the development of the Malay majority in the context of post racial riots that had occurred in May 1969. Not surprisingly, most of these Malaysian students were from the majority Malay-Muslim community that was identified as *Bumiputeras*.

The NEP is in practice an affirmative action programme for the majority of Malaysian society considered as ‘sons of the soil’ or *Bumiputera*. The students, from A level to university level from all around the country were sent to college and universities in English speaking countries (UK, US and Australia) as well as other parts of Europe and in the Middle-East (Egypt, Jordan etc). These students would stay and study abroad for 5 to 10 years and sometimes longer.

Once they were sent abroad however, there was little that the Malaysian government could do to control the activities of the students. Zaid Kamarrudin (1973) and Saari Sungip (1976) were a part of this wave of young potentials sent over England. Both, who later became JIM’s presidents, were sent to Southern England (Brighton Polytechnic and Southampton University, then Birmingham University) for their A

levels then they would have pursued into engineering studies at a university level.

Zaid and Saari had a similar family background and education with basic religious knowledge. Both recall the cultural shock when arriving in England (see appendix X). Facing a situation where they both had no cultural landmarks, Islam was revealed to them as a part of their identity. Thus, they naturally joined Muslim groups and associations that had been formed by young Muslim students from the middle-east. This was their first interaction with non-Malaysian Muslims and foreign Islamic literature. From that point Zaid Kamarudin realized ironically that “*in Malaysia our understanding of Islam was general (...) The West was a platform to understand the meaning of Islam*” (see appendix X).

The activities offered at that time were clearly politically motivated in the midst of the Cold War when capitalism was opposing socialism, Islamism would be seen as the third main political ideology. Before that Saari would have never considered the political means of Islam: “*From that point I started to see Islam as an ideology, not only a religion*”.

Saari and Zaid attended regularly the talks, seminars and prayers organized by Islamic students associations or low profile groups in mosque or private places. The intellectual training of the highly motivated students would be organized in small cells called *Usrah*. This would concern a minority of the members of these organizations. Most of the other members, less politically involved, would just attend the Friday prayers or rather less intellectual activities.

The groups would read common literature and discuss it, listen to scholars or Islamist activists from abroad or locally settled. According to the literature of reference such as Hassan al-Bana and Sayyid Qutb the influence of the Ikhwan'ul Muslimin and the Jama'at-e Islami in those groups were obvious. Nevertheless, the link to *Ikhwan* would never really be mentioned as the members of this organization would have escaped from prosecution in Egypt.

As the training went Zaid and Saari realized that their own ambition for Malaysia was different from the mode of struggle praised by Ikhwan or Jama'at. Therefore the Malaysian student would still participate to the *usrah* training given by these organizations but had

the same time shaped their own movement. The Islamic Representative Council (IRC) was created earlier among Malaysian students as a sort of loose federation, registered within the Federation Of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) the umbrella group for all the students' Islamic societies created in mid sixties to early seventies. As the members joined the informal group created by Saari and Zaid, and then return to Malaysia, the group will always remain labelled as the IRC. (see interview saari p2)

IRC was an alternative to the Muslims middle-eastern societies (associations), with its own references and aims. *"We adopted the approach of Islamists like Maudoodi, al-Bana and Sayyid Qutb. Our training was grounded on the Quran, Hadith, Tafsir ect"* (saari) . According to Saari, in 79 about 8000 Malaysians muslims student sponsored by the government, 1500 of them would be members of IRC while only 600 to 800 would be really active in the training. According to Zaid this group would be the most organized and numerous at the time. (see appendix A).

Fuziah Salleh arrived in the UK in 1976, she was 17 at the time. She remembered being approached by Zaid kamaruddin's wife. In fact as a vocal and critic student she was seduced by the concept of this intellectual and political training and interaction with others Muslims. *"IRC was a very intellectual and critical platform that suited my profile"*.

A clear distinction was made between male and female in the *usrah*. The female would have had access to the same literature nevertheless they would receive minor attention from external speakers like activist and scholars giving talk to those group. In the 80's, as a women leaders, Fuziah advocated in favour of more fairness between the men and women groups and had a statement adopted to restore the women status within IRC.

In fact the interaction between male and female within IRC was quite rare but rather highly encouraged. "Chaperoned rendezvous" and marriages would be organized between members. As Fuziah Salleh recalled *"We didn't have many occasion to socialize because of its separation between men and women. We had a kind of matchmaking buro which later become official."* According to Saari that was *"Love at the first sight but after marriage"*.

## 2. 80's: *the Return of the Elite to Malaysia: IRC Members Come Home*

The creation of this students' Islamist reformist movement in the UK should be put in the context of Malaysian domestic politics at the time. The foundation of IRC could be seen as an alternative Islamist entity while the Islamist Party of Malaysia was allied to the ruling party UMNO.

In December 1976, Anwar Ibrahim, leader of a strong Islamist movement based in ABIM, came to England and met the IRC members. In fact, IRC and ABIM had a common influence from Ikhwan. ABIM had links to Ikhwan via the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) which was the front of the Egyptian brotherhood in Malaysia. ABIM members would be sent to join and interact in the IRC program. In fact the ambition of the IRC group to join and support the Islamist movement in Malaysia was slowly grounded into the existing Islamist non-governmental structures of Malaysia.

The IRC members started to come back to Malaysia in 1978. Zaid and Saari came back to Malaysia in 1982. The consensus made then among the members was to not create any alternative movement but to support the existing structures (NGOs and parties). *"We found that there was a vibrant Islamic movement in Malaysia thanks to Anwar Ibrahim. Because of our experience in forming the IRC as an attempt to create a unified movement we decided not to form another movement"* (ZK interview 2). At the time the group had been joined by other returning students from the middle-east or other parts of Europe, such as Professor Hatta (from Egypt) who later became the second president of JIM. At the time the structure was informal and the group had no particular name.

The co-optation of Anwar by UMNO in 1982 led to the discrediting of Anwar himself and ABIM in the eyes of the Islamist activists in Malaysia and abroad. *"Unfortunately Anwar changed a lot when he joined UMNO, and everything collapsed; my world collapsed"* (Saari p2) *"Our ideal of a mass Islamic movement was trashed"*. In fact, because of its weak link to the international Islamist network at the time and as a consequence of Anwar's choice ABIM lost its international influence. In contrast, IRC had very strong links to other Islamist circles in the US, Europe, Australia and the Middle-East and naturally became a

main interlocutor.

The Islamist reformist movement in Malaysia had started in the late 1960s. ABIM, Darul Arqam and the *Tablighi Jama'at* were among the main organizations and movements to work together towards the implementation of an Islamic state. PAS had left the ruling governmental coalition in 1978. The choice made by IRC members was to strengthen the existing Islamist movement of Malaysia.

Saari Sungip was seen as the leader of the informal IRC (since 1984) and was asked by its main leaders to implement the *usrab* training methodology within the party. “*At the time there were no strong leaders and no discipline. [...] we believe in political participation by helping PAS but we wanted to remain exclusive tarbiyyah oriented and producing Qadis (leaders) until we are strong enough to create our own organisation. [...] But we didn't want to discredit PAS or ABIM anyway.*” Saari then wrote under a pseudonym (Abu Urwah) a whole set/collection a political literature called “Usrah”.

Following the example set by Saari, each of the IRC trained leaders joined ABIM or PAS, on an individual basis and not under the banner of any organisation. Their link to IRC was to remain secretive.

### **C. The Foundation of the *Jama'ab Islam Malaysia (JIM)***

#### ***1. Late 1980's: the IRC Controversy***

Because of the strong influence and contribution made by the IRC members in term of training methodology, political strategy (etc.) tensions arose between the leaders trained abroad, all labeled as ‘IRC people’ (even though they had been trained in the Middle East but not the UK) and the locally trained leaders. In fact, a real intellectual gap existed between the elitism and intellectualism of the IRC trained type leaders and the local trained leaders and members of ABIM or the Islamist Party.

At the time the IRC was suspected by both the Malaysian government as well as the Islamist movements and political parties in Malaysia. The Malaysian government was worried that the IRC could have the same potential as the revolutionary movements that had emerged in places like Iran, Egypt and Pakistan, and was concerned

about the IRC's possible links with Egyptian and Pakistani Islamist groups that had become more powerful in their respective countries. Since 1979 the Malaysian government had tried its best to domesticate all forms of Islamist opposition in the country, and this was also the main reason why ABIM was neutralized by the co-optation of its leader into UMNO.

The IRC however was less easy to control and co-opt because of its semi-underground character and the higher level of ideological commitment of its members and leaders. The fact that the IRC was not formally registered also meant that it was not possible for the Malaysian government to ban the movement; and the fact that its activities were semi-underground also meant that it was not easy to arrest the members.

Apart from the Malaysian government, the mainstream Islamist parties and movements of Malaysia were also unhappy with the IRC. The Islamic party PAS during the leadership of its President Asri Muda was less inclined to support any form of revolutionary politics and more concerns with communal issues such as the status of the Malays and the promotion of the Malay language as the national language of Malaysia. The IRC's non-communal and anti-racial stand meant that it did not support the narrow nationalism of PAS or UMNO, and as such it was not welcomed by either party.

In time there developed the rumor of an IRC plot to infiltrate the Islamic party PAS. The 'IRC conspiracy' story spread in the Islamist party's newspaper (*Harakah* etc. see reference) and IRC members would be seen as spies trying to take over the Islamist movement. "*The fact that we encouraged our returning members to ABIM and PAS was a failure; they [ABIM and PAS] thought we were infiltrating them*". The IRC's involvement strategy contributed to a climate of profound suspicion on every of its members until now.

In an attempt to put an end to the controversy, the IRC members decided to identify themselves in an official manner. The creation of JIM was done with the approval of Anwar Ibrahim and PAS leader Ustaz Hadi Awang. From then any returning students from abroad with IRC type training would join the organization.

In fact the organisation submitted its application for registration in 1989 but managed to get it only cleared in 1990. Because of its political ambition the Registrar of Societies (ROS) insisted that the organisation must not have any political activities. In that respect, JIM had to be registered as a “society” (*jama’ah*) and not an “association” (*pertubuhan*).

Saari became the first president (until 1999) of JIM and Professor Hatta, a medical doctor trained in Egypt, as vice president. From then, JIM would pursue the same mission as before but in an open manner.

Progressively the relationship between ABIM, PAS and JIM would be built on a shared agenda, mutual support and cordial relationships between leaders.

During the elections in 1995, JIM would take an official step to support PAS and encouraged its members “*to vote for candidates regardless of any party that would strengthen the Islamic principles*”. Saari explains “*our agenda wasn’t secret anymore and PAS was the base for us*”. On a voluntary basis, the members would then help the PAS machinery. By (date) the leadership of ABIM had changed for a younger generation (context more info exact date). In fact the newly elected president of JIM, Ahmad Azzam was related to Zaid Kamaruddin. Their family ties helped to reconstruct a confident relationship between both organisations. To quote Saari Sungip “*After many year of prejudices ABIM and JIM could finally come together*”.

## ***2. 1998 onward, the Reformasi Era: Affirmation of a New Political Actor***

In 1997-98 the Malaysian economy suffered its worst crisis since independence in 1957 with the East Asian financial crisis. This in turn led to a political clash between the then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Anwar Ibrahim.

In the mist of the political divorce between Mahathir and Anwar, JIM felt that the time for a major political change was come. The relationship between the mentor and his protégé had developed to the point that they would be seen horse riding together. Nevertheless, as Mahathir declared “*in politics, today’s friend are tomorrow enemy and today’s enemy are tomorrow friends*” (at the UMNO General Assembly of May

1998) and the political conspiracy to sack Anwar had started soon after the challenge to Mahathir that year.

JIM's leadership responded to the preliminary attacks on Anwar by sending a letter to both individuals. Anwar would deny the gravity of the situation until his official expulsion from UMNO on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1998. A second letter from JIM was sent to Mahathir to ask for the repositioning of Anwar in the government. To quote Saari "*We were trying to pull a hair from a tiger face!*" During all this time, JIM's leadership would maintain his non-confrontational position towards the ruling party. On September 4<sup>th</sup>, JIM issued a memorandum of support to Anwar. The previous disagreement that opposed the former ABIM leader to JIM was buried in the name of Justice (Appendix B).

The *Reformasi* movement was officially launched on 6<sup>th</sup> September when Anwar pronounced the motto for its first time. To support Anwar, the main Islamist organisations had come together in informal coalition. On 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> September the GERAKAN was the umbrella by ASASI (ABIM's intellectual group), PKPIM (ABIM student branch), JIM and ABIM. In fact JIM would be seen as a leading organisation and was involved in the organisation of the demonstrations of 20<sup>th</sup> September at Dataran Merdeka (Independence square).

Anwar was arrested on 20<sup>th</sup> September. The following day while all the leaders of the coalition were holding an emergency meeting 4 leaders of ABIM were arrested by special branch agents and detained for 10 days. From that day, ABIM would remain less involve in the coalition.

By 25<sup>th</sup> October the main political parties would have join the coalition under the impulsion of PAS leader Fadzil Noor. Gerakan Keadilan was not officially registered but it comprised of 12 NGOs and the three main political parties (among which ASASI, PKPIM, JIM, ABIM, PAS, PRM, DAP, GAGASAN, SUARAM and PUM). The coalition organised road shows to advocate for the release of Anwar considered as a threat to public order and detained under ISA (exact legal ground). The coalition would deliberately hide the reformasi agenda and only call for justice.

Until his first arrest and after his release Saari Sungip would be a main speaker for the road shows and among the most vocal leaders of

the Islamist movement in the context of *reformasi*. And even after his arrest, JIM would be closely identified with the reformasi movement and the related campaigns by other civil society NGOs that were aimed at dismantling the structures of state control in Malaysia, ranging from the campaign against the Internal Security Act to other repressive laws like the Sedition Act.

The most important development of this period (1998-2009) is that JIM was able to transform itself first into a registered social movement and NGO and to also make its way into the mainstream of Malaysian civil society and politics. After his release from detention without trial, Saari Sungip along with other leaders of JIM became important personalities in the civil society space of Malaysia: The IRC was no longer an underground movement, but had become a mainstream civil society NGO working with political parties for both the democratization and Islamisation of Malaysian society.

How and why was this possible? The first reason was the collapse of UMNO and UMNO's image following the *reformasi* movement. The reputation of former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was severely damaged by the campaign launched by Anwar and the negative media impact of Anwar's arrest merely added to the feeling that the UMNO party had lost touch with the Malaysian public and Malaysian Muslims in particular.

This did not change during the period of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (2003-2009) who was likewise blamed for the failure of governance in the country and his inability to meet the demands of new Malay-Muslim NGOs, many of which were demanding right-wing protective measures to defend the position of the Malays and Islam in the country.

The second reason was the reform process that was also taking over in PAS thanks to the measures that were introduced by a new generation of PAS leaders like Hatta Ramli and Dzulkefly Ahmad, who were also previously linked to IRC/JIM. As a result, PAS was now becoming a new national-based party reaching out to non-Malays and non-Muslims, articulating a new political discourse of good governance, democracy and transparency. As PAS become more mainstream and less Malay-centric, the space was opened for new groups

like JIM to come forward to present a more ideological and less communal-centric interpretation of Islam that was in line with democratic reform.

Thus the changes in both UMNO and PAS had a direct effect on the civil society space of Malaysia, and this was the new space in which JIM could present itself as a model Islamist NGO/social movement that was more in tune with the aspirations of the new generation of Malay-Muslim activists who no longer wanted to see the perpetuation of the ISA, NEP and other forms of governance associated with the Mahathir era. Reformasi was therefore the biggest and best opportunity for JIM to re-launch itself as a national movement with national appeal, and it did so when it was given the chance.

The *reformasi* era gave the opportunity to the organisation to strengthen its strategy, its leaders and to achieve its political ambition as a part of the Islamist movement. To quote Saari: *'JIM was big and famous because of the reformasi campaign. We achieved in 2-3 months what we couldn't achieve for almost 10 years'*.

#### **D. Conclusion: What is JIM Today?**

The aim of JIM in term of its political ambition was achieved by its gradual penetration of the Malaysian political sphere either by member activation within political parties or by its role as a main interlocutor and partner for every political party (but more particularly within the opposition).

According to Zaid Kamarudin, 10% of JIM's members are affiliated to political parties. Also most of them would support the Islamist Party or Keadilan while a small minority would be UMNO members. Nowadays about 10 leaders of Malaysian politics on State and parliamentary levels are JIM members. There are no longer active in the organization but as life members they remain faithful to its project and ideology. In Keadilan, the contribution by former JIM active members such as Fuziah Salleh represents another opportunity for the party to gain the support of Malay-Muslim constituency more particularly among women.

PAS leaders and members are still trained according to the *Usrah* model inspired by JIM and based on the political literature wrote by

Saari Sungip under his pseudonym Abu Urwah. Nevertheless, the “IRC conspiracy myth” remains a political tool within PAS to undermine the position of its leaders who are former JIM’s members. To quote Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad:

“The fact that JIM remains seen as an elite and intellectual organization has certainly limited its reach to the masses but the aim of the IRC member always been the creation of an exclusive elite group...”

IRC is still active in the UK but had changed its name to the Majlis Shura Muslimin (MSM) and is now more open than it was in the 1970’s. In fact the organization is officially registered and no longer exclusive or secretive.

It is important to underline the fact that JIM never supported any political violence. The core ideology of the organization is grounded into an Islamist ideology influenced by Ikhwan’ul Muslimin and Jamaat-e Islami but in a “modern/ revised/ adapted” version. In that sense, JIM leaders have been working for the establishment of an Islamic state by a democratic process. Their ideal of a modern Islamic state is one that aims to promote the role of welfare state, protection of minorities and the rule of law.

Throughout its history JIM has never been opposed to the democratic process or the concept of the nation state. It has been playing its role as an independent third party calling for the strength of the political opposition (by political parties and civil society) and the enhancement of the rule of law denouncing abuse of power (defending press freedom to a certain extent and abolish ISA).

In terms of its cadre-based training and emphasis on creating a generation of Islamist intellectual elites, JIM can be compared to the Jamaat-e Islami of India and Pakistan. But unlike the movements found in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt and other parts of the Muslim world, JIM remains more ideologically focused and less inclined to any form of violent politics. More importantly in the Malaysian context JIM was one of the first movements to talk about an Islamic identity that was not linked to racial identity and the status of the Malays, which made it an Islamist movement that was non-communal and non-sectarian by nature. After three decades of race-based politics under the NEP, this

was a welcomed change for many Malaysians of all races and religious backgrounds, and it increased its appeal to the younger generation of Malaysian voters and student activists.

JIM remains an Islamist movement that is aimed at creating an Islamic state in Malaysia, but the aim of the Islamic state is one where non-Muslims would be given equal status and rights compared to other Muslim citizens. In this sense it is also a democratic Islamist movement that seeks to bring about Islamisation via constitutional (democratic) means and not by force or violence. It also accepts that in a democracy an Islamic state can be voted out of power, and as such political Islam can only succeed in the context of a free and transparent democratic system where there is no state repression or excessive control.

The final question is about where JIM will go from here and how it will deal with the rise of new right-wing communitarian Malay-Muslim NGOs and social movements that defend superior status of Malays in Malaysia.

As yet JIM does not have any non-Malay Muslim leaders and so has yet to show that it is truly open to non-Malay members. But like PAS, JIM also accepts that in an ideal Muslim state any Muslim can rise to power and become the leader of a country or society as long as he lives up to the standards of good governance. This position is being strongly rejected by Malay NGOs like Teras, Prowaris and Pekida who insist on the superior status of Malays as the Bumiputera of Malaysia, and in the years to come can only lead to further ideological struggle between JIM and the new wave of right-wing Malay NGOs.

On 9 May 2009 Saari Sungip as former leader of JIM engaged with the leaders of Prowaris in a public debate held in Kuala Lumpur to debate whether the Internal Security Act was *halal* or *haram* in Islam.<sup>2</sup> Once again, this public stand taken by a former President of JIM demonstrated that JIM was an ideological movement that was promoting a vision of Islam that was non-racial and pro-democratic. The success of JIM in the future will therefore depend on how strong

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<sup>2</sup> The public forum was entitled 'ISA: Halal or Haram' and it was a reaction by the former JIM members and the Anti-ISA movement against the statement of the leaders of the Malay NGO Prowaris that the ISA was not only halal but should be used as a tool to defend the status of Islam in Malaysia.

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the non-racial and pro-democratic forces are in Malaysia, and whether a movement like JIM can develop the process of democratic reform any further.

## APPENDIX

### I. Interview with Saari Sungip,<sup>3</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008

#### *The beginnings of JIM in 1976, England:*

“We were not exposed to political matters as students in high school. So I was naïve when I arrived in the UK in the 1970s but I was open to see activism among Malaysian students. That was in the mid 70’s at the peak of the cold war and the revival of Islam. The students there were then divided into three camps. The three main ideologies in the cold war context of the 70’s: socialist, nationalist and islamist. For the first time in my life I was exposed to a lot of literature in English even religious scriptures like the Quran and Hadith in English, the writings of (Syed Abul Alaa) Maudoodi, the work of Sayyid Qutb (*Milestones*), the works of the al Ikhwan’ul Muslimin, Myriam Jamila (a convert to Islam), etc. These writings provided me with a new perspective on Islam. I was reading as well a lot of magazine produced by Islamic societies in England.

From there I started to see Islam as an ideology not only a religion. Islam was a challenge to the other systems; it was a new discovery for me. But in order Islam to be effective it was to develop a strong movement.

Islam as a political ideology: From there I was trained by the Ikhwan’ul Muslimin and the Jama’at-e Islami in low profile groups active in mosques and (student) societies, with main reference to Hassan al-Bana in their teaching.

We were quite fortunate because there were a lot of Ikhwan and Jama’at supporters in England. The Ikhwan never revealed their link to the movement but it was obvious to us by their reference to al Bana, Sayyid Qutb ect. So we attended their Quranic studies circle and Hadiths studies circle. I was a good student but then Islam became my main study no more my A levels (at Aston) or later my mechanical

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<sup>3</sup>Saari Sungip received his A level certificates from Southampton Technical College, after which he studied for a degree in mechanical engineering at Aston University.

engineering degree. I attended all classes still but it was not my main priority anymore. I got my degree with honors.

We have got to participate in the Islamist movement to struggle and strengthen it. I got married with my wife when I was 20 when I completed my A levels. Family is very important. My wife was studying too there. We married quite early it is important that you have your cell, your family. We actually organized very well the marriages among us. We introduced people to each other, and planned their marriages. "Love at the first sight.. after marriage" We were different than the socialist Malaysian students in that respect.

We were preaching a lot among Malaysians. I got two kids when I was in the UK. It make the marriage stronger, we had a mission: We had to plant the seed of Islam into the kids.

When we understand Islam as a mode of struggle, Islam has to be implemented through political power but it has to come through a democratic process. That's the problem with Pakistan there was nothing like a democratic process. The same was the case for the *Ikhwan* in Egypt. So we didn't want that for Malaysia.

Because of the Ikhwan we took Islam as something confrontational to the government. Even if there is a democratic approach in Maudoodi but that was not enough. We always believed we were the enemy of the state during that time. PAS was actually in the government at that time. But there was a strong movement in Malaysia led by Anwar (Ibrahim). ABIM was seen as a vocal quite radical movement. But to us there was a gap in our perspective and thinking. In the UK we understood the movement as something compact and unified. In Malaysia the movement had no proper discipline in membership or leadership, that was a mass movement and we don't subscribe to the idea of a mass movement with no discipline or no training.

**Usrah system:** We adopted the approach of Islamists like Maudoodi , al Bana, Sayyid Qutb. Our training was grounded on the Quran, Hadith, Tafsir, ect. So we thought that the Malaysian system was quite loose. We had to memorize a lot the Quran and Hadith and read a lot.

At the peak of 1979, around 1,500 Malaysian students had joined the program. 600 to 800 were activist students who attended regularly. There were around 7,000 to 8,000 government sponsored Malaysian students, mainly Malays. And 10,000 private students, but the majority among them were Chinese.

Anwar was very popular among us. Ikhwan was looking at ABIM and there was quite a lot of leaders working in WAMY (World Assembly of Muslim Youth), that was the front by which the Ikhwan operated. When Anwar was released the relationship between PAS and UMNO was bad, in 1976. Datuk Fadzil Noor was then the President of ABIM (who later became PAS's president). Anwar organized the movement with ABIM as the base then the student movement.

Anwar came to UK in December 1976, we were quite impressed with the idea to strengthen Islamic movement. He sent some ABIM members to interact with us in our programs. There was a close relationship with the PAS leader and Anwar at the time. So we were keen to a strong united Islamic movement led by Anwar.

Unfortunately Anwar changed a lot when he joined UMNO (in 1982). And everything collapsed. "My world collapsed". ABIM was very strong in Malaysia but not overseas with a lot of links to Ikhwan, while we were very strong in the states and Europe, Australia and the middle east. We decided to work without name and continue our training.

People labeled us as IRC – the Islamic Representative Council. When our pioneers received training they were ABIM members in Malaysia but they organized themselves in the UK under this name. Then they joined us and after they had returned IRC remains and became a platform for our training. The whole idea was placed on idealism and we never named ourselves. We believed in *usrah* only but we encourage our members to be members of PAS and ABIM to spread *usrah* methodology. But that was not infiltration, that's a sensitive matter. According to the Sunni criteria there is no Islamic state. Before we thought that Saudi was the best but after our training in UK we change our mind.

**Tarbi haraki:** movement oriented training, to struggle for the establishment of an Islamic state.

Islam must be implemented within a democratic process but we do not subscribe to it fully. The fact that we encourage our returning members to ABIM and PAS was a failure; they (PAS/ABIM) thought we were infiltrating them. We continue to do training abroad in Australia, Europe, Us, Jordan, Egypt to fill up the network . We adopted a secretive approach that was not public, and I would only train the leaders among students groups. Most of the training was done to Malaysians in private places. We never approach then foreign student except in Britain where we would invite foreign (Arabs) speakers. But the training for our movement was just for Malaysian students. We interacted with others just for public events. We had our own standards of discipline and modes of organization.

At the time, there were no strong leaders and no discipline. We never discredited ABIM but we believed that an Islamic movement needs a strong *Qadis*, strong leaders. It can go through political parties or civil society. But we lost most of the time.

In 1984, I helped PAS and I wrote materials for them (i.e. books). We talked about Islamic beliefs and the Islamic way of life, etc.. I was not a member (of PAS) then. I wrote under my pseudonym. In fact I never had any contact with PAS before going to England. We believe in political participation by helping PAS but we wanted to remain exclusive *tarbiyyah* oriented and producing *Qadis* (leaders) until we're strong enough to create our own organization.

Between 1987 to 1988, we had a lot of contacts with PAS. In 1989 we decided to officially identify ourselves. Since 1984 I was seen as the leader of this informal group. In March 1989 we decided to register as an official NGO, we got in July 1990. The discussion was going on since late 1988. So, all the people who would have return from abroad and have had the *usrah* training would join JIM. This training wasn't done in ABIM or PAS unfortunately. But we didn't want to discredit PAS and ABIM anyway. So we met Anwar and Ustaz Hadi of PAS to tell them our plan without looking like a threat to them. We want to carry on the mission with our own identity, same mission.

I was the first president of JIM until 99, and after me the position of President was passed on to Professor Hatta.

Our relationship with Pas continued officially and we keep participating in their program. The 'bonus' came in 1998 when Anwar was expelled from the government and the leadership of ABIM change to younger generation. They had a different perception, Ahmad Azzam (the then President of ABIM) had no prejudices against us.

Prior to Anwar's expulsion (from UMNO) we held many discussions and we organised the Gerakan Reformasi (around 5-6 September 1998): ASASI (ABIM's intellectual group), PKPIM, JIM and ABIM. After many years of prejudice ABIM and JIM could finally come together.

On the 25 October 1998, there was the first meeting organised by PAS, DAP and PRM (Party Rakyat Malaysia) and 14 NGOs with SUARAM. My dream became true, and we had created a strong reformist Islamic movement. We officially launched the GERAK movement on 27 October (1998) and even the PUM (Persatuan Ulama Malaysia- Malaysian Ulama Society) joined us.

We would only go for a common agenda how to defend Anwar, support the *reformasi* movement, free Anwar and build a pact between parties for a new Malaysia.

In JIM we do not separate politics and other activities. After gaining our official status we were no longer a threat to government. We have worked with everyone. We are part of civil society because we remain independent and we don't take any single sent from government, the funds come from supporters. We have preschool institution and primary school. We came be very vocal and credible because of this independence.

We started with 5,000 members and by the time I left we were 8,000 but now we more than 10,000. It is not much but good enough.

During my time, we were open to anybody (even PERKIM). We worked with non-Muslim NGOs and many other religious groups. But as Muslims we try to work with everyone. We work a lot with Muslim Chinese NGOs like MACMA. So we are sharing members as well.

When I was engaged in the *reformasi* movement I was given a duty by Wan Azizah (the wife of Anwar Ibrahim) to stand for the Keadilan party. Then she appointed me as a central position member. But I was in prison at the time. Then I was released in 2004 I contested

for Keadilan as well. When Anwar was released, I met him and told him that I want to go back to Islamic-oriented political activism, so I went to PAS. He would have liked me to stay in Keadilan. At the elections of March 2008 I stood as a PAS candidate and won a seat in the state assembly. I don't think I have changed in terms of methodology, even when I was anonymous, IRC or JIM, my ideas remains the same.

ABIM's participation in Keadilan has been quite minimal. A lot of their members have migrated to PAS. For JIM it is different. When the *reformasi* took place we were approached by PAS's President (Fadzil Noor) to give names for candidates in the state elections. So we offered leaders to PAS. At the same time Anwar did the same. We held internal discussions and let our members choose the first or the second option. But they remained JIM members. As the president I was assigned to strengthen the coalition, arrange meetings, give advice etc.

**JIM and the *sharī'ah*:** The establishment of the *sharī'ah* law by 2020 goes along with Keadilan's agenda. So we, JIM, try to always make the both agenda fitting.

When the philosophy is understood then people wants to be punished. They voluntary come to justice. The whole idea of this philosophy is not to punish but to educate and to fear only God. The *sharī'ah* is *intemporel* and universal.

In the whole idea of JIM they have a big picture. In it there is the democratic process, and elections. So the actors are political parties. So, how to place JIM's agenda within this framework and strengthen the movement? Once people understand Islam they will go for justice and vote right. So we educate on one side and we support on the other side. We don't have to tell them what to vote.

## II. Interview with Saari Sungip, 30th January 2009

**Origins of JIM/IRC in Europe/UK:** 'It started when we were student activist in the US, Europe and the Middle East. We wanted to organize a strong Islamic movement in Malaysia. ABIM, Darul Arqam and Tablighi Jama'at were a part of it.

Then we worked together with ABIM when Anwar Ibrahim was then their leader. When he (Anwar) joined UMNO (in 1982) our ideal

of a mass Islamic movement was trashed. When Anwar left to join UMNO then PAS was out of UMNO too. Then we thought about working on a strong Islamist movement. Between 1984-1985 we worked on strengthening PAS. The problem at the time was "Identity". When we embrace this idealism, as students, our aim was to base the movement on proper training and recruitment like in *Jama'at-e Islami* and *Ikhwan* or movement in Libya and Sudan and part of the *Wahhabi* movement as well. So we wanted a strong movement like the Prophet had during his time. We wanted a nucleus of a movement and raise a state fully founded on the principles of the Quran and the tradition the holy Prophet and his companions. That was our ideal as students.

In Malaysia, the reality was different. It was going to be a mass movement: the question of recruitment, organization, training of leadership and so on was not easy. But we were a small number of people, with good education and of the same age between 25 to 30 with the same training ground. It was easy for us to share the ideology. We tried to create this within PAS, where people are coming from different backgrounds. We formalised the effort and were helped by people from al *Jama'at-e Islami* and *Ikhwan* from Jordan and else as a part of the brotherhood. We believed in the unity of the *ummah* and that it could be strengthened by common *shurah* (consultation). We had the same ideas but not in a such hard line as them. We found it quite difficult anyway. The question of identity rose again. The IRC controversy came up again. We wanted to end this image of a student based movement. We wanted to embrace the struggle and embrace a common platform so we created JIM. 1988-89 the main leaders of PAS were quite supportive they needed an Islamic NGO based movement to support PAS. ABIM was more inclined to Anwar and the government. Our agenda wasn't secret anymore, and PAS was the base for us.

When we started JIM, we had the notion of non-confrontational approach with the government or any other entity. We wanted to create a benevolent image of an Islamic movement efficient in helping people, a mediator that translate people need into policies. We did not use the concept of *hudud* or Islamic law but we would practice Islam and spread it with good actions. If Islam is genuinely the base for PAS struggle

then yes, we were promoting PAS.

We couldn't register as a *Jama'ah* but we had to go for *Pertubuhan* (Society) because the government didn't want us to go to politics that's why it took us so long to register. So officially we cannot be involved in politics .

We work with agencies of the federal government but then we express our support to local states under the opposition as well (Kelantan). We were supportive constructive program for the society until the *reformasi*.

During elections, the JIM members would vote. In 1985, we officially encouraged our members to vote for candidate regardless of any party that can strengthen Islamic principles. That was done only once. But then our members would help the with the election machinery, on their own will and they will go for PAS.

**The *reformasi* period:** We supported *Reformasi* and Anwar Ibrahim, as we were friends since the 70s. Even if we had some disagreements he will always remain a friend and a brother in Islam.

Anwar responded by calling us in his office. His political secretaries were there. At first he denied that there was any problem (between Anwar and Mahathir); it said that it was like a son and father relationship. So he told us to not worry. Then things didn't improve and he (Anwar) was sacked on 2<sup>nd</sup> September (1998). Then we send a letter on the 3<sup>rd</sup> to Mahathir asking him to take Anwar back. People would say that we're trying to pull a hair from a tiger face!

That was not about Anwar only. We had felt betrayed by him and so on but then we had forgiven him anyway. But it was more on the principle of justice.

On the 3 and 4<sup>th</sup> September, right after the sacking of Anwar we made a big public consultation among the members and leaders of JIM. Prior to that being non confrontational we heard In June that Anwar would be sacked. We had time to reinsure our non confrontational stand. We understand that destabilize UMNO but destabilize that all country. We decided then to send a letter to Mahathir, to ask him to arrange his relation to Anwar and solve the problem. We send the same one to Anwar. We deliver a memorandum of support to him on the 4<sup>th</sup>

The good thing is that during that time when Anwar was about to be sacked the relationship between JIM and ABIM was very good. Zaid and ABIM president were relative so it made things easier. Through ABIM we had a lot of information about Mahathir's moves. So during our meeting within JIM, after we had met Anwar we understood the big conspiracy that was going on. It was the first time that we were exposed so much to internal politics.

We formed GARAKAN REFORMASI RAKYAT: with PKPIM, JIM, ASASIM, and ABIM launched on 5th September. Anwar didn't want to even pronounce the word *Reformasi* that year but he wanted to create the base for it. I was jailed at this really moment and my wife was in hospital. But at the beginning it was not very clear. Anwar was hoping that he would reconcile with Mahathir. Various leaders would go to meet him at night at his place.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> he pronounced the word *reformasi* for the first time. On the 7-8<sup>th</sup> we issued a open letter to Mahathir saying that his behaviour was not Islamic and we distributed it via our members everywhere. We met him (Anwar) on the 9<sup>th</sup> at his house and we knew then that no reconciliation was possible and he ensured us that he would not go back to UMNO.

We were very prominent then. More than ABIM, our decisions were very strong. On the 20<sup>th</sup> we were a part the organizers of the big demo in Dataran Merdeka (Independence Square) but we didn't expect so many people. But we were not ready then and we asked them to go back home. That was a big mistake we should have not sent them back stay and push Mahathir out. The police wasn't prepared as well. It is the first time I met Tian Chua. This day was a success because for the first time people of Malaysia were taking the street for political reason. They had a political conscience.

PAS was silent at the time because of the clash between UMNO and PAS. Fadzil Noor met Anwar but on a personal agenda.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> some of our friends were detained. On the 21<sup>st</sup> we held a meeting without realizing the danger. As soon as we set down in ABIM office 20 SBs (Special Branch officers) came in and took four leaders of ABIM for 10 days. Yusri Mohammed was the assistant secretary general wasn't on the list, so he was alone and he became our

contact.

**Anwar's *reformasi* road show:** The image of 20<sup>th</sup> September is the image of *reformasi*. But then it was hard to organise ourselves. Organising demos was not our agenda at the time. We made statement send letters through internet etc. But we were beginners in this matter.

Fadzil Noor then called for PAS, PRM, DAP, SUARAM, GAGASAN, JIM, PUM and ABIM (3 political parties and 12 NGOs) to come together. So we agreed. Politically of Fadzil Noor was smart. Because he first brought up the ISA issue and asked for the release of the detainees without mentioning *reformasi*. So it was a good consensus. That was a big blessing for the Islamist movement because we could come together with PAS. That was one of the best part of my life as a social activist: GERAKAN KEADILAN. It was just a coalition not registered. Wan Azizah became the icon of the movement. ABIM wasn't in the scene anymore after their detention. They attended only the meeting but nothing public

I was on a road show throughout the country even Sabah and Sarawak and Singapore. When I came back from Singapore, I went to the hospital to see my wife and was arrested on the parking lot before I had a chance to see her and our new born baby. That was a big shock for me. It has been very hard during the detention but I still remain public and active. I had to be strong. At the time we had lawyers but not very good ones. We had no experience.

By 1999 we became stronger. JIM was big and famous because of the *reformasi* campaign. We achieved a lot during *reformasi*. We achieved in 2-3 months what we couldn't achieve for almost 10 years.

**December 1998 to January 1999:** We met a lot of people with Anwar in Indonesia and Singapore to strengthen the *reformasi* movement with Tian Chua as well and Sivarasa and other Islamic organisation leaders. We had to decide the future of the movement. Tian and Siva wanted something loose. ABIM wanted a politically structured movement. I was open. Finally we decided on a loose movement that was NGO-based. We had our own symbol (ADIL) but we never got registered.

By February JIM was very vocal. We had big meeting throughout the country and for the first time we concluded our stand on supporting

the establishment of an alternative government in Malaysia. We send a memorandum to everyone even including PBS. We wanted a political pact between the five parties. When Party Keadilan was established, we decided that Fuziah (his wife) and I will go to Keadilan. At the time she was the chief of the women's wing. I was the middle man between PAS and Keadilan.

I couldn't imagine the coup de grace. We got the simple idea to creating wave for constructive works creative awareness and more demand for Islamic change. But to me that should be a linear process. Suddenly it was exponential by our decision to join *reformasi*.

### III. Interview with Dzulkefly Ahmad, 20th March 2009

**On his former links to the IRC:** 'IRC! Oh my God.. That ghost has been hunting me... I don't know why IRC was so demonised! I was very much a part of it; but I must state very clear that is phenomenon of the past, past P.A.S.T.

The IRC was the genesis of JIM but I must stress that don't have any kind of bondage of affiliation or affinity to the IRC anymore. That would be seen as treason, for a PAS member to belong to another political organisation. The IRC is not no longer an entity. I never was a member of the central committee of JIM. I was in Kelantan, and I established JIM in Kelantan but that last for a year and that's it. In the days of *reformasi* I was already very closely associated with PAS. And by the election in 1999 I was tasked by the late president and I've been here ever since.

When did you establish JIM in Kelantan? '1996 or 1997

**On the IRC controversy and the allegations that the IRC had 'infiltrated' PAS and ABIM:** 'I went back to the UK between 1990 to 1993. I came back (to Malaysia) in 1993 and that was when the IRC was transformed to MSM. I don't have any archive material on the controversy. I want to forget that history; it has been terrible. But it keeps coming back to us. Every two years comes back, last year it came back. Even this year, I nearly lost my position last year because of so called academics very envious of my position. I'm no longer bothered about it. I don't want to lose anymore sleep. It is a boogie they're using that for political means. They hope that it would jeopardize

my position to get the mandate of the members in PAS.

Do the members of PAS still believe in this conspiracy theory? 'Yes there are some who believe in it, but not the majority of them otherwise I would have lost my job. I'm an elected central committee member, for the last two years. And I don't know if I'm going to be elected again because now it is not about IRC anymore but the "Erdogan" faction.

Oh you haven't heard about "the Erdogans"? Then you've been missing the contemporary development in PAS. You know people like us, so called the professionals, the moderate are been called The Erdogans by some group in PAS. It is the same kind of accusation as IRC. So Erdogans are the moderates, seen like more pro-Anwar, pro-Pakatan kind of things. But ever since Erdogan when he said what he said to Simon Perez. This group is fan of Erdogan so they all want to be like him. So they won't call us Erdogans anymore because it is now a good thing. But it used to be very, very pejorative. These are the liberals the erogans but now everyone must be erdogan even DAP or keadilan people.

**Why was the IRC seen as a threat to PAS?** 'It is more conspiratorial. They think that "WE" are going to take the party from them and so on.

**On his own position and role in the IRC:** 'I was among the leaders in the early period of 1970's. Then I came back and forth. Between 1989 to 1993 I was the leader of the IRC in the UK because Zaid and the others were back in Malaysia.

**Fuziah Salleh mentioned that the women would have a different access to knowledge than you. What's your view on this?** 'I may and may not agree with that. You have to replace it in the context prevailing political background. Yes maybe we were in a way coming from a background of Pakistan's Jama'at-e Islami and the Egyptian Ikhwan's type of segregation. That was the idealism of any student Islamic movement at that time. Yes I must say she is right. She is the leader that broke all those wall and put in place policies that are empowering for the sisters. So yes I think we experienced that transformation to something more equitable empowerment and tasking responsibilities for women.

**When you left what were the changes when IRC transformed to MSM?** 'MSM was/is more open and was registered at the Malaysian students department. Our movement (IRC) was more clandestine and underground even if we were also having quite open program and engage others as well. But in term of structure people didn't really know IRC. We would have a spokesperson, I was one of them and we'll go to public meetings.

**What about people outside of IRC where they aware of its existence?** 'No. We were a university-based movement. We were not attempted to have a mass appeal. But we were small and never tried to have something else. We wanted to help PAS and ABIM. That's how the idea of IRC as 'infiltrators' came about. We were very well trained and had an strong presence. Like when Mustafa Abdul Kader straight up went to PAS very quickly.

**He gave up politics right?** 'I don't want to talk about him; I don't want to be quoted.

**How many former IRC or JIM leading members you have?** 'There are a few...You can say that this is our legation. Our claim of being well trained to me should be judged by our actions. The time is now to prove ourselves. That why I always challenge my colleagues in JIM. If truly you want to have a bigger role there is limitation in JIM you have to go to politics. It is what I did. JIM must assume its role as an NGO. But whoever feels that they need more political engagement they must graduate from the world of NGO activism and come to help us.

**What is the relationship today between JIM and PAS?** 'It is a good relationship. JIM supports PAS. Occasionally they come and have sessions with the president. Intentionally, I don't take a part of it. So some of us are in the central committee of PAS, like Mujahid Rawa. He is the son of the former president of PAS – Ustaz Yusof Rawa – who was the ambassador of Malaysia in Iran. He is now an Mp in the state of Perak.

#### **IV. Interview with Dr. Hatta Sharom, 19th March 2009**

**On the formation of IRC in Egypt :** 'I was a leader among Malaysian students who were studying in Egypt. Our group was named

the “*Kumpulan Medic*” (Medical Group) but it wasn’t registered. Our aim was to merge Islam and medicine, revise our Islamic knowledge and go further with it. We were pretty much influenced by the *Jama’at-e Islami* of Pakistan and *Ikhwan’ul Muslimin* as we were based at the University of Cairo. We followed the speeches and talks organized by *Ikhwan*. But that was complicated for security reasons. To me the *Ikhwan* was a rational, holistic movement, contemporary and relevant to the context we were in.

I had the soul of the seeker I wanted to learn more and more about Islam. I joined a Sufi movement, but that was not enough. I was a part of *Tariqah Ahmadiyyah Idrisiyyah Shadhaliyyah*. Al Bana started as a Sufi in *Tariqah al Hasafiyah*. The spiritual core of the Ikhwan is from al-Bana as shown in *Al Ma’thurat*. He was himself a sufi so there is no contradiction here. But the Jama’at-e Islami doesn’t have that approach. To me Sufism was a truth without a name but now Sufism is a name without truth.

I wanted to reinforce my knowledge and go into depth.

I married in 1975, in Egypt and had my first son in 1979. I have 6 kids. I graduated in 1981. My wife actually graduated from the same school before me.

I first met the IRC people in January 1977. Then I met Saari (Sungip) and Zaid in 1982. But before that I had heard their names and they knew about us (the Egypt group) as Islamist activists. We actually had exchanges with them in 1979-1980 when a group of people from IRC came to Egypt. I remember two of them: Ustaz Megal Mohd Amin and Abdul Muhaimin (we called him Kebab brain back then).

When we were back in Malaysia, in the 80’s, we made an attempt to go with PAS and ABIM. I was following ABIM’s usrah. The Egyptian trained group had no real name, so we were considered as IRC, as we had the same intellectual training but in a different place from the UK.

I was the President of JIM from 1999 to 2003, right after *reformasi*. I was vice president since the first day of our creation. Before becoming JIM president I was the President of IMAM (Islamic Medical Association of Malaysia). Nowadays I’m not really active in JIM anymore, but I’ll remain a life member. My wife and daughter are active in JIM. I’m now very busy with the medical college and involved in a

lot of relief mission as a doctor, I just came back from a short trip to Palestine with MERCY Malaysia. I write a lot of books as well.

From 1999 until 2003 we had tough years in JIM as consequences of the *reformasi* experience. It was very challenging. We never changed our position, and our motto was JUSTICE. We had to fight to get people out and ISA was our big target. Fuziah and Saari had a personal inclination to politics so they entered in political parties right after *reformasi*. (Saari was arrested twice under ISA from 2001 to 2003 and in 1998)

JIM members would rather support Keadilan or PAS. A minority of them are UMNO members; but on a national and state scale none of the leaders are JIM members.

The funny thing is that when I was JIM president I was still a civil servant, as university teacher, and still been promoted 3 times. That was an exception though because other JIM members had been sacked because of their involvement.

I brought the academic touch to JIM. Saari, he was the freedom fighter, so I was the academic. I always tried to remain unpartisan and reminded the people to be extra critical. But coming after Saari was tough; he was the hero.

During the *reformasi* time all our families were involved. The whole country was there. It had never happened since the riots of 1969. But the energy of *reformasi* declined by the time Anwar was out (of prison). *Reformasi* has been a success but it couldn't sustain by itself.

## **V. Interview with Fuziah Salleh, 19th March 2009**

Hajjah Fuziah Salleh was born on the 13th July, 1959 in the state of Johor, but she grew up in Pahang, where she received her early and secondary education in Kuantan, before furthering her studies in the United Kingdom after her form five MCE results was announced to pursue her 'A Levels' at St. Anne's. She graduated in Counselling Psychology from University of Reading, United Kingdom and later completed her Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from University of Wales, United Kingdom. During her student years she was actively involved in NGOs in the UK, where she headed a youth

organisation - The Young Muslims UK, (1988-1992) – whose members are youths of different races in UK. On returning to Malaysia, she channeled her contributions in an NGO, Jamaah Islah Malaysia (JIM) as head of women's wing (1993-1999). She was also member of the Supreme Council NCWO in the year 1995-1997. Among her contributions was to initiate work on a shelter home for young girls, Raudhatus Sakinah, which until today has operated into its seventh year. Fuziah Salleh held the post of National Women Chief of Party Keadilan Rakyat (KeADILan) for two terms, ending last May, 2007. She is now the Head of training, Deputy Director of the National Election Bureau of KeADILan and member of the party MPT (Highest Leadership Council).

**On her early involvement in IRC :** 'I came back from the UK in 1993 after 12 years. IRC was the platform for us in England then in Malaysia, then JIM was created and I joined in 1993 and was appointed as the leader of JIM's women wing. Then I amended the constitution and organized election; I was then elected as women chief.

I arrived in the UK in 1976, when I was 17 and I joined the IRC in 1979. Zaid K's first wife approached me and invited me to join the movement. The IRC was a very critical intellectual platform and it suited my profile. From 1988 to 1993, I went back and forth from Malaysia to UK and I joined the Young Muslims association. They actually co-opted me to strengthen the women wing.

I was based in the south of the UK, Zaid K and the others were in Birmingham. But we would organize IRC summer and winter camps and meet quite often.

We felt under the influence of the Ikhwan and the Jama'at-e Islami. As women we had the same intellectual training but a different access to scholars or discussion. We would have special sessions. So when the guys would have three days with particular scholars we would have 30 minutes.

When I came back to Malaysia I was the second women in chief in JIM but I was the first one to go on stage. I changed the way of interaction between men and women within the organization and the image of a fundamentalist contemporary Muslim women.

In the early 80's I had a statement adopted by IRC to restore the women status within IRC for more equality. Men and women are naturally different, we both have our role in society but we, women shouldn't remain at the second place. I worked on bringing a Malaysian Muslim thinking. The influences we had from the Ikhwan and Jama'at were mostly Arabic culture and it is not us, as Malaysians. I worked on adapting the writings of Arabic's scholars and principles to adapt it to our cultural context. I actually had learnt a lot from Young Muslims. I was the only Malaysian there and we interacted with young Muslims who wanted to be British but of whom the parents were Jama'at or Ikhwan followers/supporters.

Arabic culture is not ours, we are different. Malaysian women always worked, drive had responsibilities within and outside the family circles and mixed with men. I want to be fundamental but contemporary.

At this time, the male within IRC were very open and accepted the idea. We, as women, wanted to be empowered. Since I left, I think that this idea hasn't really progress in JIM. It could have moved forward faster.

Now I give another look on JIM, because I m outside. The organization is seen as elitist, intellectual and a close circle. It is quite true in fact. In that sense I think Jim failed to reached the masses.

**On JIM's role in *Reformasi*:** 'As women we were a part of the decision making process during the sack of Anwar. I was in the executive committee.

**On match-making among the members of IRC and JIM:** 'I met my husband Dr Rozli, in Malaysia; we 're actually blood relatives. But it is true that within the IRC we were doing a lot of match making we had a kind of match making bureau and later it became official. We wanted to find people within the same intellectual circles. So we arranged meetings and we would chaperon the brother and sister. Actually this kind of practice is not really Malaysian but more inherited from Arabic culture. But it was hard for the female student to be alone far from their family and they often wanted to met someone and get married. As well, we didn't have many occasion to socialize because of this separation between male and female.

**On her role in the Keadilan party:** ‘I joined Keadilan in 99 at the same time Saari joined PAS. I choose it because I couldn’t relate to the way PAS treat their women; they still play a second role. But I relate to the ideals and struggle. Moreover Keadilan was a multiracial party and I was really attracted by this. Most of the men would go to PAS, it is the easiest way for them. The struggle of being an Islamist within the Keadilan party is an higher challenge to me.

There is 5 active former IRC/Jim members in Keadilan on a leadership level; 3 of us made it through the elections and are now in the parliament.

**On the position of the *shari‘ah*:** ‘I believed that Islamic law can be implemented with this actual constitution. It would be a gain for Muslim women actually especially in the case of divorce. It could be done just by empowering the Islamic court. But the bills are men made and should definitely be reviewed. Like in a case of rape the victim needs to bring 4 witness, that is ridiculous.

## **VI. Interview with Zaid Kamaruddin, 21st January 2009**

Zaid Kamaruddin was born in Ulu Langat, near Chongkat, Selangor and came from a religious family where his father was an Ustaz at a religious school. He was later educated at the Malay College of Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) in Kuala Kangsar, Perak and then sent to further his studies in England by the Malaysian government. In Britain he studied engineering under a Malaysian government scholarship that was offered to young Malay students under the New Economic Policy (NEP).

**On his early impressions of life in England:** ‘The biggest shock was the freedom we suddenly had: freedom to do anything, no cultural norms; as a result you sort of get the sense of your identity; you miss it because you can’t really identify with the society around you. We were not rejected or discriminated, but you’re just not at home. A quest for an identity that defines who you are. In Malaysia, you feel quite controlled; there are rules and regulations, cultural norms. You know how to behave. Then the big question comes to you: about the meaning of life.

Being with the Muslims was a natural move. We were a group of Malays. The contact with Muslims from other part of the world was very enriching, you fit in. At the time there were not very many local Muslims. Creation of a local Islamic society at the Brighton polytechnic college and University of Sussex. We met every Friday for prayers and talks. That is when you confront your understanding of Islam. Our understanding of Islam in Malaysia was general but we don't really ask the fundamental questions. But we mix with other Muslims; we were exposed to different school of thought and crystallize your practice and your knowledge of Islam. We basically learned Islam in the West. The West was a platform to understand the meaning of Islam.

We came into contact first with members from Jama'at-e Islami. The early books we read were from Maudoodi, Sayyid Qutb, Hassan al-Bana, etc.) The contact with the Ikhwan came later. To us they were just Arab brothers; we didn't really identify them in another sense. In the early stage we didn't feel very impressed by them; they were arguing all the time. We Malaysians are less hot blooded or agitated than them. They can be quite nasty. We were keener to the nature of people from Turkey or Sudan.

We had our own study circle, international within this Islamic society. Every year we would have a certain curriculum to study and to talk about and readings. It is like any other student organization with yearly elections, yearly reports, etc. It is officially registered and there is an elected leader.

The Ikhwan members in the UK were people who escaped from prosecution in the Middle East. It was not a formal or official group in the UK then.

I stayed in the UK for nine years. I was very much involved in student activities among the Malaysians. By 1975 we started to organise the Islamic movement among the Malaysians students. By that time we had many groups of Malaysian students all over the UK. The IRC (Islamic representative council) was supposed to be a sort of federation, or the membership (Islamic representative from everywhere in the UK). It was started as an alternative to various local Islamic circles. We were really active. We felt that we must be organized in a Jama'at to ensure that we really keep ourselves and our mission of Islamic

understanding. We have our mission in Islam. And that should carry us to meet the challenge of life. We would by then know that it is very important to understand Islam as a part of a community not just individually.

We still continue to interact with other groups but among the Malaysian Muslims we had then our own platform we were the most organized and numerous group at the time. We were a part of the FOSIS, Federation of Students Islamic Societies. We contribute a lot to the local organizations. That would be the federation, the umbrella organization of all the student Islamic societies organized between 1965 to 1968. The MSS (Muslim Student Society) was made up of Arabic speakers. Now they have changed the name of IRC to Majlis Shura Muslimin (MSM).

In the IRC there are other things we put a particular stress on like understanding the West, the meaning of life according to the western philosophy etc. We met the liberals, the socialist, the communists, the capitalist, etc. Among the Malaysian group the dominant direction was the socialist point of view but there were many supporters of the government at the time but they didn't really know what the government's ideology was then. The debate was on the basis of philosophy and we didn't fight. We would listen to everyone. Same today we continue to engage everyone, every NGO in Malaysia.

I came back in Malaysia in 1982, same as Saari (Sungip). The IRC members started to come back in 1968. We found that there was a vibrant Islamic movement in Malaysia thanks to Anwar Ibrahim. Because of our experience in forming the IRC as an attempt to unify the movement we decided not to form another movement. That was our understanding from the Quran: unity. So we didn't form another group in Malaysia but supported ABIM until 1990. When we emerged in 1990 there was a big gap between what we were in the UK and when we emerged again as the same group. You can trace the leaders from this student association's days till now. The positive aspect is that we were well prepared when we emerged as JIM. We played our role to understand the Islamic teachings. Same *modus operandi* as in England *usrab* groups. *Usrab* is a common methodology propagated by Ikhwan.

From the very beginning we had certain differences with ABIM. We have totally shed the concern for ethnicity, and we don't carry that, that sense of belonging to a race but that's not defining us. We were Muslims first. So we don't talk about the supremacy of the Malays. But ABIM does use that sort of language. But we still didn't want to make a big deal and form another group. Anwar came in the government then we start to wonder what we should do. He join UMNO in March 1982, we were against that not only the IRC but even some ABIM leaders. ABIM would lost its status as a leading Islamic NGO. The Muslim civil society then was led by ABIM. So we raised our opposition to ABIM and UMNO and Anwar Ibrahim. The result is that ABIM lost its status.

Before that some changes occurred in PAS as well. A group of new PAS leaders was coming from ABIM. Among them they were some people from IRC.

In march 1982, when Anwar joined UMNO with the endorsement of ABIM. The leadership of the Islamic group was taken up by PAS at the end of the year. At this time Dato Muhammad Asri was replaced by Haji Yussuf Rawa. ABIM was the main Islamic group in Malaysia. Before those guys were active in ABIM long before Anwar was sent to UMNO they activate themselves in PAS including Ustaz Hadi Awang (he was leader of ABIM in Trengganu from a while). PAS was then trying to attract members from ABIM who should be naturally close to PAS. But many of the members would be sent as well to UMNO. The results are that you find ABIM's member everywhere. At the end of 1982, the Islamic party was led by many figures with an Islamic movement background like Fadzil Noor in Egypt, Ustaz Norani as well, many ustaz from medina or Egypt. In 1987, the leadership of the Islamic movement changed from ABIM to PAS. At the same time we thought that political party wasn't the best platform to carry the Islamic message. So we decided to send some of our members to PAS. We put a very high stress on *tarbiyyah* (education). But in the political party the activism is more about check and balance or confrontational. So we cooperated very well until 86 the general election, we help PAS. We supported the campaign. We were using computers; that was impressive! Printing materials etc.

The newspapers began to say that IRC was controlling PAS. The organization was still informal and not registered. People were feeling under threat. But it wasn't within PAS at first, the issue was raised in the media, used by UMNO. The PAS already had started to boycott the newspapers but the government was under alarm. Only very few people from IRC were active in PAS so it was not supposed to cause an alarm. One of our members in charge with education in PAS, was requested by Ustaz Hadi, to help him. At some point they wanted to put him as number one: Mustafa Abdul Kader but we refused. We didn't want trouble. He is no longer in PAS. He was at the time the second in command of Pemuda PAS. When the leader of PAS's Youth wing left, Mustafa Ali wanted to take Mustafa Kader as the next leader of PAS's Youth wing. But we sent a delegation of IRC members to say no, it would have created problems. Between the general election and the internal elections within PAS is when the IRC issue raised.

(Another group was influenced by the Iranian revolution; there is an issue about Shias as well.) The influence of the Iranian revolution has always been there; from the methodology to the identification of a political success and the theology. It remained an issue within Pas for a while until PAS finally made a statement on the matter) When it comes to the election within the party this issue came out. To be with or against the IRC? And so on... So we didn't want him to be the leader. We just didn't want such a stress and remain united.

Since then we started to discuss the idea to form our own group. But the issue never really disappeared. We never requested anything from any side;

Today we are fully independent. Our organisation is unique in the sense that we are very universal. We have members in UMNO but mainly in PAS and Keadilan. They are PAS members who join us as well while remaining in PAS.

In short, Islam defines our position to God and to the universe and our mission is to bring mercy to the whole of universe. The best system is the Islamic or *shari'ah* system. We believe in the creation and that God knows provided us with the manual Quran as well as the messengers to enlighten us. Every ethnic groups got send a messenger. The implementation of Islam should be on individual and global levels.

We are no longer in harmony with nature the global warming is a proof. We're not a threat other community should say that Muslims are coming together and we'll be safe within their rules. The Muslims by nature are ready to power share and tolerant.

## VII. Interview with Zaid Kamaruddin, 30th January 2009

### On the membership of JIM (since 2006) and their profile:

There have been no major changes, and the profile (of the membership) is roughly the same within the past few years, around one thousand members. The profile remains mainly young educated middle class.

We do not claim that we are apolitical. We have a political stand and can support one or the other. We are not really committed to any particular party as such. But we work from time to time with the Government.

The opposition is not strong and is not on the verge of taking over. So we have to work with the ruling party. Our basic motive is to have a credible opposition and be strong enough to offer an alternative.

We have different opinion from the opposition we're pro-Islam and pro-*shari'ah*; but we can agree on other issues like abuse and corruption. We participated in the early discussions that led to the formation of Anwar's party. So we are involved in a way with the justice party because many of our members are in this party. But we are also critical (of Keadilan) because we want a strong opposition, and there needs to be an opposition coalition.

The government is very weak and there are a lot of problems inside. The result of the last elections (in March 2008), reveals the weakness of this government. But this opposition isn't strong either. The parties (of the Pakatan Rakyat) are opposed and there is no central leadership. The idea was to have a political pact and they might have been themselves surprised by the results (of the March 2008 elections) they were not expecting to get so many states. They don't have cohesion. If they take power they will fail. But the goodwill of the people is there. The problem is that PAS speak out in public the issue of Hudud and alcohol; they should have a common stand on it. We tell them that they have to move their party to the center and rise up, have the psyche of leaders.

We have around ten people from JIM who are leaders in those parties and more members. They might activate themselves as party activists. But once they re in a party they don't take orders from us anymore. JIM's main activity today is actually not political but we focus more on welfare and civil society. We are more famous for those things. We hope to be a mediator. If you work in political platform so we have our enemies but it is more ideological than anything else.

**Influence of JIM on politics:** 'We are not the main reason for the positive changes we see in Malaysia today, but we participated. The change hasn't been concluded satisfactorily according to our own objectives.

**On his role as JIM president since the end of 2003:** 'The term is every two years but renewable. As President of JIM I get a small allowance but I need other support coming from members and I manage to support my family.

**Guidance for new converts to Islam and *Dakwah* (missionary work):** 'Some of our members are involved in to counseling for apostates. But it is not through JIM. As far as our missionary work is concerned (the East Malaysian states of) Sabah and Sarawak are different from the peninsula in terms of the composition of the population. Conversion work there has done by JIM .

The aim of missionary work is not really to get more numbers. The consensus of accepting the nature of the religion is more important, but we don't need a Muslim majority to establish an Islamic state. Well if they are many Muslims it is better. It is useful for politics but it is not a guarantee.

### **VIII. Excerpt from the speech by Zaid Kamaruddin, President of JIM, 2008**

**JIM and the Pakatan Rakyat:** Jim takes the stand that the system of check and balances is very important for the governance of Malaysia today. This role of strengthening and balancing can only be efficient if there is a political opposition and NGO's within civil society, which have authority. In this respect, Jim sees the creation of Pakatan Rakyat (the coalition of people) as a positive development. It would strengthen a meaningful change in politics and governance.

Power sharing has been proven in history. Malaysia is an example of such power sharing over half a century. It is also the approach taken to solve the political crisis that occurred in Kenya and Zimbabwe. Until now, Malaysia has practiced a model of power sharing based on communities. Pakatan Rakyat is a different model of power sharing between parties of different ideologies. This is a coalition between a social democratic leftist party, an islamist party and a *pragmatic party that cannot be ideologically categorized*. [*satu parti pragmatik yang tidak boleh dikategorikan ideology politiknya*]. This is a coalition that will find it more difficult to succeed.

Despite that there are enough similarities that when mixed together can served as the basis for good governance. Each party may have a different *raison d'être* and discourses though it is still relatively easy for them to have a general consensus on issues like justice, good administration, openness, zero tolerance towards corruption, expanding public involvement in decision making, fundamental rights, widening freedom (of speech, information, political organization, media and religion), equal division of wealth, eradication of poverty, protection of social welfare and others.

For JIM, the Pakatan Rakyat can succeed if it is built on a clear basis and sincere efforts. The following things are quite necessary:

- The formation of an executive leadership assembly for the Pakatan Rakyat
- An agreement to formally institutionalizes the Pakatan Rakyat to at least to outline and specify the objectives and the decision making process of the coalition
- The basis of governance for the Pakatan Rakyat states governance: to outline a common basis on issues such as the questioning of/ challenge to the Islamic state, the status of Islam and the Malays.

It is important for the leadership of Pakatan to act as one entity. The public wants to see a united leadership with one voice and not plural voices from three corners that are sometimes harmonious and sometimes not. It is therefore important that the Pakatan Rakyat is formally institutionalized.

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