

For immediate release

MEDIA STATEMENT

National Action Plan on Prevention and Counter Violent Extremism: Malaysian Government Urged to Be More Transparent and Inclusive in The Consultation Process

Kuala Lumpur, 30th November 2021 | We, the undersigned organisations and individuals, commend the government's effort in formulating the National Action Plan (NAP) since its mandate by the United Nations in 2015 to address the threats of violent extremism. NAP has also been briefly mentioned in the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021-2025) document. However, we view that the ongoing consultation process in formulating NAP should be more transparent and inclusive with multi-stakeholders.

We are deeply disappointed by the lack of serious efforts by the Malaysian government under the new administration of Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri to engage with civil society organisations (CSOs). It is clear that some of the most important CSOs who have directly or indirectly worked in the areas of Prevention/Counter of Violent Extremism (P/CVE) and human rights are not being involved and properly consulted. This should not have happened for a national-level policymaking process. We urge the government to uphold transparency and inclusivity as follows:

Firstly, **to recognise the role of civil society organisations in P/CVE**. We believe that security issues and measures in Malaysia cannot be state-centred and unilateral. Against the backdrop of changing threats of religio-political extremism in Malaysia and the region, it is impossible for the government to manage it alone. It needs a collective effort between the government and CSOs as recommended in many international instruments in relation to P/CVE. CSOs have nuanced expertise and experience in grassroots advocacy including the inclusion of youths, women, and marginalised communities. It has served as a 'preventive' measure in P/CVE against both violent and nonviolent extremism.

Aizat Shamsuddin, Director and Project Coordinator of Initiative to Promote Tolerance and Prevent Violence (INITIATE.MY) stated that, "Omission to include broad-based CSOs in the consultation process would risk a deepened gap between the government and CSOs in P/CVE efforts, creation of silos in academic and advocacy work from recognising the intersectional issues in P/CVE, and ineffectiveness to formulate impactful NAP particularly in relation to policies and programming to promote social resilience against violent and nonviolent extremism."

Secondly, **to take a holistic approach in formulating NAP**. We believe that the government has vastly invested in 'countering' rather than 'preventive' measures of violent extremism. Without undermining the importance of the former, the formulation of NAP should focus on prevention for effective, sustainable, and less punitive measures to prevent radicalisation in violent and nonviolent extremism.

In this regard, the formulation of NAP shall **address the root causes of radicalisation within the society** that could increase public susceptibility towards supporting violent and nonviolent extremism. Among others include the exclusion of ethnic or religious minority and gender groups, socioeconomic inequality, uncritical education system, and the spread of religio-political ideologies that justify hate and violence.

In the same breath, the government shall also **propose reforms of existing laws and policies at the federal and state levels to combat institutional discrimination and marginalisation** based on the grounds of ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, economic class and place of origin that could provide a justification and reinforce exclusive ideologies embedded in the extremist groups. If not addressed, this would also lead to becoming a counterforce against the success of P/CVE efforts.

Again, a holistic approach cannot be achieved without a government that listens to CSOs and meaningful participation of CSOs for critical discussion and exchange of best practices based on similar goals and aspirations of peace.

Aizat Shamsuddin also said that, “We can learn a lot from the Global North and South about government-CSOs engagement in preventive and rehabilitative efforts. Open consultations, fundings and partnerships are very common in these countries to promote social integration, critical and inclusive dialogues and education because they are key to addressing the threats of violent extremism and communal conflicts. Over the years, it has resulted in a success of democratising P/CVE efforts at the state, municipal and community levels. Thus, I call upon the Malaysian government to adopt a similar approach. We can start with the NAP consultation process.”

Moving forward, we have made a few recommendations for the Malaysian government under the new administration to take action to ensure transparency and inclusivity in formulating NAP:

1. Make the consultation process of NAP an open platform for CSOs.
2. Add and plan a series of consultation processes to ensure progressive collection of ideas and feedback.
3. Ensure that the formulation of NAP policies, programming and implementation are prevention-oriented to prevent both violent and nonviolent extremism. It shall be decentralised and mainstreamed at the national, state, municipal and community levels, not solely under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
4. Ensure the application of a holistic approach based on human rights framework in the formulation and implementation of NAP to address complex and overlapping root causes of radicalisation.
5. Create a monitoring and evaluation system to ensure the consideration of CSOs' ideas and feedback into NAP and effective implementation of NAP.

— THE END —

Prepared by,

Initiative to Promote Tolerance and Prevent Violence (INITIATE.MY)
Powered by Komuniti Muslim Universal (KMU Malaysia)
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Endorsed by,

Organisations:

1. North South Initiative
2. IMAN Research
3. Sisters in Islam (SIS)
4. Alternatives to Violence Project Malaysia
5. Justice for Sisters
6. Legal Dignity

Individuals:

1. Dr. Faisal Tehrani
2. Dr. Azmil Tayeb
3. Andrew Khoo
4. Mohammad Alshatri bin Abdullah
5. Nik Azura binti Nik Nasron
6. Qiana Falisha Afiya Jessica binti Davidson
7. Ahmad Muziru Idham Adnan
8. Arabelle Yong
9. Faris Saad
10. Yap Heng Lung



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About INITIATE.MY

Initiative to Promote Tolerance and Prevent Violence (INITIATE.MY) is a data-driven initiative to promote tolerance and prevent violence based in Malaysia. INITIATE.MY is powered by Komuniti Muslim Universal (KMU Malaysia) that was founded in 2015 by former radicalised youth committed to counter extremism with counter-narratives based on the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) and human rights frameworks. For more information, please visit www.initiate.my.

For enquiries, please contact:

Aizat Shamsuddin
Director and Project Coordinator
aizat@kmumalaysia.org

Hisham Muhaimi
Project Officer
hisham@kmumalaysia.org

Reference List

1. **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 70/674 (2015)** urges the member states to develop their own National Plan of Action to prevent violent extremism. See: https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674
2. **2019 Human Rights Council report (A/HRC/40/52)** reaffirms the inextricable links between human rights and security and calls upon the participation of civil society organisations in counterterrorism strategy. See: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/057/59/PDF/G1905759.pdf?OpenElement>
3. **United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2178 (2014)** stresses on the need to take a more holistic approach which encompasses systematic preventive measures and the importance to engage with the civil society organisations. See: [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2178\(2014\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2178(2014))
4. **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 70/675 (2019)** stresses an interdisciplinary “All-of-society” and “All-of-government” to address the drivers of violent extremism. See: https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/675
5. **Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace (2015)** stresses on uniting the strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people. See: https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_446.pdf
6. **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 70/262 (2016)** emphasises the role of civil society and holistic approach in advancing efforts to sustain peace. See: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_262.pdf
7. **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 70/1 (2015)** reiterates that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. It may include building peaceful, just and inclusive societies, protecting human rights and promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. See: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf
8. **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** adopted 10 resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS): Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2008), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019) to ensure the protection of women’s rights and recognise the participation of women in peacemaking, conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.
9. **United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2535 (2020), 2419 (2018) and 2250 (2015)** recognise the role of youth in efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and the mainstreaming of the youth, peace, and security agenda into the work of the UN secretariat.
10. **United Nations Plan of Action** outlines recommendations in seven key areas https://www.un.org/sites/www.un.org.counterterrorism/files/plan_action.pdf

11. **Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021-2015)** suggests that the National Action Plan (NAP) will be developed as a guide in ensuring rapid response against terrorism and extremism threats. See: <https://rmke12.epu.gov.my/en>
12. **IMAN Research Advisory 2020** highlights the urgency to develop Malaysia's National Action Plan. See: <https://imanresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/June-2020-advisory-issue-4.pdf>