

Murtad Issue – When will it Stop?

News:

The never ending issue of apostasy in Malaysia continues with the pledging of the Sarawak State Chief Minister, Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Openg, that the state government will amend the Sarawak Shariah Court Ordinance 2001 as a solution for Muslim converts to leave Islam. He was reported to have said that it is not fair to leave Muslim converts who wish to exit the religion in suspense, as the National Registration Department (NRD) would not accept their applications to convert out of Islam. He also mentioned that this is simply a matter of administrative decision. The main opposition party, Pakatan Harapan, also urged the Sarawak government to amend state laws to provide clear guidelines so would-be apostates can get the necessary Letter of Release that will allow them to be officially recognised as no longer being Muslims. These proposals came after the Federal Court ruled last Tuesday that only the state Shariah Court has the power to hear apostasy cases after four Sarawakians applied to leave Islam.

Comment:

Even in the heat of the anticipated 2018 General Election, the issue of apostasy has again managed to turn the attention of the public. Apostasy is unfortunately a chronic problem in Malaysia. In the latest issue, four individuals who wish to apostatize or have actually left Islam have appealed for their case to be heard at the Civil Court level and questioned the qualification of the Shariah Courts over their decision to quit Islam. To make matters worse, the Chief Minister of Sarawak, who is a Muslim, promised to provide a solution for those who wish to apostatize!

In order to have a clear picture of the issue, we have to understand the real situation on the ground. Three questions must be answered – 1) why would these Muslims wish to leave Islam; 2) what would be the role of Muslims in preventing them from leaving Islam; 3) what would be the role of the state in preventing apostasy? A very clear understanding of these concerns can be realized by focusing on a very simple basis – Is the question of apostasy considered within the domain of the true Shariah or is it treated within the secular framework? Today, most unfortunately, secularism dominates our lives. We live in the nuance of freedom; our laws are secular, our economy is capitalistic and our politics is democratic. The role of Islam is shrunk into only our private affairs. In other words, Islam and Shariah are practically absent from our lives and if there are remnants of them, it is trapped within the dominion of secularism, only able to be officially recognized within a very small sphere of life. Hence, manifestations of the beauty, the justice and the truth of Islam are practically absent from our lives. On this account, it is not entirely surprising that Muslims who are never committed to Islam would leave Islam. Within a private and constrained scope, Muslims have very limited opportunity to stop other Muslims from leaving Islam and there are always open opportunities for Muslims in our current state of affairs to leave Islam.

So what would be the best solution to this very serious problem? When Islam was fully implemented and ruled more than 1/3 of the earth under the Khilafah, manifestations of its beauty, justice and truth were clearly apparent. When this was the state of affairs, conversion to Islam was in the masses and Muslims and non-Muslims alike lived in a just and harmonious society. Why then would Muslims wish to leave Islam when being a Muslim in those eras was undoubtedly a blessing! In fact, it is the non-Muslims who entered into Islam en masse! If Muslims who have a disease in their hearts wish to apostatize, they may have to think twice. Islam has a protection mechanism to stop Muslims from apostatizing – death sentence in this world and the threat of being among the dwellers of the Fire in the hereafter.

Imam Bukhari narrated from Ikrimah who said, «من بدل دينه فاقتلوه» **“Whoever changes his religion, kill him”**. And Allah (swt) warns Muslims in the Quran: «وَمَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَأُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ» **“Whoever turns away from you from his religion, then he dies in disbelief, then his deeds will be lost in the world and the Hereafter, and they are the dwellers of the Fire, they will abide therein.”** [TMQ Al-Baqarah, 2: 217]

The apostate will be given the opportunity to repent and if he refuses then he will be killed. Hence, the only rational way of solving the problem of apostate or for that matter all problems befalling Muslims today is to push for the re-establishment of the Islamic political entity, the Khilafah in the way of Prophethood.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Dr. Muhammad