

(TRANSLATION)

SPEECH BY RECIPIENT OF NATIONAL MAAL HIJRAH AWARD 1437

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By

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Hijrah is not about travelling. Everyday thousands of people travel by different means of transport from Mecca to Medina. No one commemorates it. *Hijrah* is not *just* about migration. People have migrated from Mecca to Medina throughout the ages. No one commemorates it.

What is it that distinguishes the *hijrah* of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and his companions from Mecca to Medina 1437 years ago that had caused the second Caliph Umar al-Khattab (r.a.) to establish that event as Year One of the Hijri calendar, and to be commemorated every year until now?

The difference is that *hijrah* was a migration of a Muslim community which was on the brink of destruction to join another group of Muslims to jointly repel the attacks of the enemy and save Islam. They not only succeeded in doing so, but they also succeeded in establishing a state that became the nucleus of the expansion of the religion of Islam and Islamic civilization to the whole world to this day. That is the difference.

Hijrah happened only once. The story is the same. To repeat the story every year may be boring. But, there is one thing that remains fresh arising from the incident. That is the lesson to be taken from it. That is why this event is held. Otherwise it is nothing more than listening to a story teller.

Today, the Muslims in Malaysia are in a similar position as the Muslims in Mecca 1437 years ago. However, it is not because their number is small but because they are disunited. That is the reality that we must realise. Should we not take a lesson from *hijrah* that we commemorate today?

I believe that there is a reason why Allah (s.w.t.) has enabled me to speak again despite having lost my voice twice. I believe that there is a reason why Allah (s.w.t.) has given me the opportunity to speak at this gathering and to the whole country today. As a sign of gratitude, I will utilise it, even though with only one side of my vocal cord functioning.

So, I hereby call upon all the leaders of the main Muslim groups in Malaysia whether they are in the government, opposition or NGOs to follow the example set by the Prophet (s.a.w.) and his companions 1437 years ago and make a "*hijrah*" to re-unite the Muslims in this country to avoid the looming disaster facing Islam and the Muslim *ummah*. For that purpose, they should focus on long-term interests of the *ummah* rather than their current self and group interests and find a way to merge or, at least, to work together to protect the religion of Islam and the Muslims in the country.

All Muslims in Malaysia, whether they are leaders or followers, should focus their attention on the similarities that exist between them and not on the differences which are deliberately sought or invented. They should focus their minds and energy to strengthen and develop the *ummah*.

We are not taking away the rights of others. We are only protecting our rights as had been agreed upon and enshrined in the Constitution. I also urge all Malaysians, regardless of race and religion, to respect the rights of others enshrined in the Constitution and together build our country on the existing basis as we have done since independence. Malaysia has enough to offer to all, except the greedy. To disturb the existing state of affairs is to book disaster. As a result, everyone will lose.

For the Muslims, in the unsatisfactory state of affairs of the Muslim world today, we should look forward and take the initiative to be the leader of the Muslim world. We should not feel ashamed to think so. In fact, Malaysia is already leading in many things. Malaysia is an example of a modern, Islamic country which is democratic, moderate, safe, peaceful and developed in all areas including administration, economics, education, health and others. Malaysia is in the forefront in the achievement of maqasid al-Shariah. Malaysia is in the forefront in Islamic finance, halal industry and many others. We only need to have confidence in ourselves and improve our achievements.

But, for that, Muslims in Malaysia must unite and be united.

Indeed, there is no valid reason why we should be disunited. Our God is one. Our religion is one. Our goal is the same. Differences of opinions in the implementation of something exist everywhere. It should not be exaggerated so as to be the reason for disunity. Disunity is detrimental to the *ummah*. In the situation that we are facing now, we should be focusing our attention to save the *ummah* and the religion of Islam in our country, not to the implementation of a specific thing. If our position becomes weak, any hope of implementing the same will be adversely affected. It appears to me that the differences of opinion that exist now is only with regard to the implementation of a particular thing. If all parties are sincere and rational, if they give priority to what should be given priority to, I am confident that the differences could be overcome without sacrificing anything.

Thank you.

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