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Malaysian Islamic Humanitarian Actor: A Case of Global Peace Mission Malaysia (GPM)

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides insights into Islamic Humanitarianism in Malaysia with the aim of analyzing the impact of Global Peace Mission Malaysia (GPM) as Islamic Humanitarian actor in providing diverse forms of aid. By using qualitative approaches of journal articles and official reports from media and websites, this paper therefore is aimed to address the first theme of this conference. It begins with definitions of Islamic Humanitarian concept with focus on the three types of humanitarian approaches in the form charity which comprises of *zakat*, *sadaqah* and *waqf*. Then, it offers a brief overview in regards of Malaysia and Islamic humanitarianism and how it has been progressing since the time of first's Prime Minister until the Pakatan Harapan forms a new government of Malaysia recently. Finally, the paper turns to focus on the role of GPM partnering in new initiative work, leading international commission, and leading in impactful and sustainable projects, providing humanitarian aid training to volunteer and advising government. The four criterions (4 criterions) described the visibility of GPM in providing humanitarian assistance for the needy countries that has made GPM a leading Islamic Humanitarian NGO from Malaysia was further discussed and defined. This paper concluded that the notion of Islam and the *Ummah* spirit are the driving force of the cause and funds and leadership are the continuous challenges in humanitarianism.

Keywords: Islamic humanitarian, Malaysia, Global Peace Mission Malaysia (GPM).

Introduction

Acheh's tsunami in December 2004 caused a remarkable global response pertaining to humanitarian action. The 174,500 estimated casualties inspired a global effort from non-governmental organizations (NGO) to provide life-saving medical attention, shelter, and water to the victims. Apart from the search and rescue teams, militaries, and NGO volunteers, private companies and businesses also took part in financial aid and crowdfunding campaigns, all thanks to the emerging technology and vast availability of internet access which makes online giving more accessible. This global mobilization was made possible by the great expansion of the humanitarian systems developed since the end of the cold war.¹

In the case of Acheh's tsunami, Malaysia was recognized as the fastest neighborhood country to provide ground emergency and assistance teams. Although three regions were affected by the tsunami, the Malaysian government sent out two aircrafts to Acheh sending medical doctors, medications, food, and shelter.² These actions showed a strong bilateral relationship and good neighborhood spirit between Malaysia and Indonesia in facing catastrophic natural disasters which cost thousands of lives and affected both countries' development, where both shared a similar identity of language and religion (Islam) in the spirit of Muslim *ummah* (Muslim brotherhood).

Beforehand, the most remembered active involvement of Malaysia in humanitarianism was during the Bosnia Herzegovina's crisis in the 1990s. During this crisis, distinct evidence showed that for the cause of Islam and *ummah*, the Malaysian government was urged and pressured to provide life-saving assistance to the Bosnians from being killed and assassinated during the Servian war (Mohd Anuar, 1993). It should be noted that the participation of Malaysia in Bosnia was motivated by its commitment to international peace and justice. In doing so, three battalions in the MALLBATT and two contingents in MALCON operations under United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Operations were sent as explained by Harun (2011). For purposes of this paper, however, these operations are viewed as undertakings for Islamic humanitarianism and *ummah*. In short, Malaysia does not only participate in the peacekeeping process under the name of UN operations, it is also to provide excellent and comprehensive long-term aid for Bosnians under the spirit of the Muslim *ummah*. For example, in late 1992 as part of a rescue mission, at least two dozen Bosnians were flown to Malaysia to study at International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) (Karčić, 2014). In fact, two young Bosnian professors were placed in IIUM to establish relationships between IIUM and universities in Bosnia. Wan Shawaluddin (2000) noted that despite the efforts taken by the Malaysian government -- efforts such as opening diplomatic channels by pressuring NATO members, financial aid, humanitarian aid and moral support, and soldier participation -- the Islamic principles and humanitarianism are often seen as inseparable when viewed in the spirit of Islam and *ummah*

Islam and Humanitarianism

The concept of the *ummah* historically indicates a sense of identity, a normative basis of belonging, and a symbol and meaning for organizing the communal life of Muslim societies at large. This general conception of *ummah* has exerted an outsized influence in multiple

¹ Barnett, Michael. "Humanitarianism transformed." *Perspectives on politics* 3, no. 4 (2005): 723-740.

² Prasetya, Jalu Dwi. "*Kebijakan Pemerintah Indonesia menerima bantuan kemanusiaan dalam Tsunami Aceh Tahun 2004-2005.*" Master Thesis Universiti Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, (2018): 4-5.

disciplines throughout Islamic history. The concept of *ummah* is originated from the Quranic tenets and is interpreted even under changing social and political circumstances that define the Muslim community's social and political interests and behaviors. Consequently, the Islam and humanitarianism are an inseparable action. It is a broad concept that encompasses traditional forms of charity in which current humanitarian aid is commonly associated. In fact, the concept of charity in Islam is to uplift social justice, which is a sacred value in Islam and a central tenet of faith, according to Ferris.³

Zakat, *sadaqah*, and *waqf* are forms of charity in Islam that intended to balance social inequality and hence promote a more just society regardless of differences of race, religion, color, and status. Indeed, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had warned that if one Muslim is not aware of his neighbor, he/she is not a true believer and he/she is not among the believers of *ummah*. This is clearly mentioned in the Prophet's sayings as the follows "By the one in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, a servant does not have faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself of goodness."⁴

Therefore, humanitarianism in Islam is not confined to the transfer of resources between the rich and the poor. Rather, as it had been recorded and taught by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), humanitarianism is any act of kindness towards or concern for other living things to embark into a better position of life, social, political, and economical conditions. It is a fundamental principle of Islamic teachings that in a holistic approach, Islamic humanitarianism means that people are not divided into givers and receivers, weak and strong, but in fact all have the capacity to do good regardless of their material wealth or social standing, claimed Abuarqub and Isabel.⁵

Humanitarian Approaches in Islam

Throughout history, the Muslim world has recorded many acts of kindness towards not only individuals but also towards communities and other living creatures. The notion of being kind and taking care of others is seen as a divine order that Muslims should not neglect. Consequently, *zakat*, *sadaqah* and *waqf* are the forms of charity that are used in Islam for humanitarian purposes

Zakat

Zakat collections began during Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) time and were the responsibility of the ruling caliph. During the Caliphates which ran from the death of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to the 13th century, all the four caliphs' frequently employed their political power to ensure that the humanitarian needs of their people were met during times of crisis. For example Abu Bakr (r.a) who is the first caliph elected after the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh)

³ Ferris, Elizabeth. "Faith and humanitarianism: It's complicated." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 606-625.

⁴ n.a, "Book of Faith and Its Characters". *Sunan Al-Nasai*. No.5017. Vol. 8. (Beirut: Dar Al-Ma'rifah, 2017). 115.

⁵ Abuarqub, Mamoun, and Isabel Phillips. *A brief history of humanitarianism in the Muslim world*. Birmingham: Islamic Relief Worldwide, (2009): 4-10.

death, declared war on tribes who refused to pay *zakat*.⁶ While recipients generally tended to be poor, *zakat* was also used to feed religious pilgrims, travelers and students at those times.⁷

However, Al-Quran clearly defined the eight *zakat* beneficiaries⁸ that allows for considerable latitude for humanitarian workers to allow not only people in emergency situations (refuges, disaster victims) but also those in need of long-term aid (the indebted and the needy) to benefit from *zakat*. Some credit the *zakat* system with creating exemplary social cohesion in the early Muslim world and significantly raising the standard of living of the poor, said Krafess (2005).

Krafess further explained that *zakat* is not merely a religious obligation but also a right of the poor as this is in accordance to Al-Quran (Al-Dzāriyāt: 9): "And their properties there was the right of the beggar and the needy...". This notion of right returns in another verse: "And those on whose wealth is a recognized right..." it should be underlined that the "recognized right" indicates a sum calculated in an objective and scientific manner. Indeed, parallel to the setting up of structures to collect and distribute *zakat*, a complete science has evolved to calculate and determine the conditions of this payment according to different riches accumulated by Muslims (gold, silver, profit from commerce, stock-breeding agriculture and mines).⁹

In that sense, *zakat* should cover all beneficiaries' basic needs: food, clothing, social needs, shelter, health, and education. In terms of *zakat* distribution, it should be distributed first within the country where it is collected, except when there is extreme need in another country (war, famine, natural disaster, etc.). Thus, history proves that with proper management and distribution, *zakat* is the best answer to support the less fortunate groups in society under certain circumstances with the hope that this group of people will at least have the basic requirements to lead a normal life.¹⁰

Sadaqah

Sadaqah was considered one of the sustainable instruments for human development, although it is not fixed and arbitrary like *zakat* and *waqf*.¹¹ It should be noted that *zakat* and *waqf* have traditionally been studied more frequently, *sadaqah* roles and its participation in alleviating

⁶ Krafess, Jamal. "The influence of the Muslim religion in humanitarian aid." *International Review of the Red Cross* 87, no. 858 (2005): 327-342.

⁷ Lev, Yaacov. *Charity, endowments, and charitable institutions in medieval Islam*. Florida: University Press of Florida, 2005. 7.

⁸ Al-Quran: 9: 60: "Alms are for the poor and the needy, and for those employed to administer the funds, for those whose hearts have been reconciled (to the cause of Islam), for the freedom of slaves, for those who are in debt, in the cause of God, and for the wayfarer in distress. Thus is it ordained by God and God is full of knowledge and wisdom..."

⁹ Krafess, Jamal. "The influence of the Muslim religion in humanitarian aid."

¹⁰ Nadzri, Farah Aida Ahmad, Abdur Rahman, and Nomrah Rashidah & Omar. "Zakat and poverty alleviation: Roles of zakat institutions in Malaysia." *International Journal of Arts and Commerce* 1, no. 7 (2012): 61-72.

¹¹ Hassan, Shafiqul, Yusuff Jelili Amuda, and Rehana Parveen. "Persecuted Muslim Minority: Zakat, Waqf, And Sadaqah As Financial Instrument For Human Development." *International Journal Of Applied Business And Economic Research* 15, no. 25 (2017).

poverty and humanitarian aid are been increasingly examined. For example, several empirical studies were conducted in order to propose a *sadaqah* as a sustainable method for humanitarian purposes. Based on crowd-funding models, Muhammad Amir and Mohd Adib found that *sadaqah* played two leading roles: the first is to provide micro-financing for entrepreneurial projects and the second is to set up health care funds for the treatment costs of the needy.¹² In addition, another study found that while respecting the multifaceted nature of *sadaqah* as a means of spiritual purification, it is also a critical factor in building socio-economic sustainability.¹³

Basically, *sadaqa* transcends the boundaries of cultural, ethnic and religious discrimination. It is regulated through an objective criterion through which emotional, economic, and political interests are dismissed in the giving process. Thus, recipients of *sadaqah* should be for all; Muslims and non-Muslims. Such action is deemed as praiseworthy and rewarding. This is according to Quranic verse: "And the feed, for His love, the indigent, orphan and captive" (Al-Quran: 77: 6). The tradition of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also supports this instruction in the following narration of Asma', a daughter of Abu Bakr, who relates: "My mother came to me and she is a polytheist. I said: 'O Messenger of Allah, if my mother came to me and she is willing, do I establish a link with her?' He said: 'Yes, establish a link with your mother'", explained Albani.¹⁴

In particular of giving *sadaqa*, secrecy is the utmost principle that should be held by the giver. This is perhaps in order to maintain the adequate attention to devotion and self-purification. In fact, it is to protect the dignity and reputation of those recipients from the public eyes.¹⁵ This action is accordance with the divine principle as articulated in the Quran, where Allah says: "If ye disclose (acts of) charity, even so it is well, but if ye conceal them and them reach those (really) in need that is the best for you: it will remove from you some of your (stains of) evil. And Allah is well acquainted with that ye do".¹⁶ Even so, those who are giving *sadaqa* secretly are among the seven categories of people who will be honored on the Day of Judgment. Ibn 'Abd Salam states: "Hiding *sadaqa* is better than showing it off. This applies to those who cannot be sure from show off (*riyā'*) and for those who are safe from the feeling of showing off, but if they show it, people would follow them".¹⁷

¹² Muhammad Amir Lutfi, and Mohd Adib Ismail. "Sadaqah-Based Crowdfunding Model for Microfinancing and Health Care." (2016) Retrieved from <http://ddms.usim.edu.my/handle/123456789/14853> Accessed on October 20th, 2019

¹³ Bensaïd, Benaouda, Fadila Grine, Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, and Mohd Yakub Zulkifli Mohd Yusoff. "Ethico-spiritual dimensions of charity: An Islamic perspective." *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 13 (2017): 171-182.

¹⁴ Albani, M.N. *Sahih al-Targhib wa al-Tarhib*. in Sahih Al-Bukhari No. 2620. Kaherah: Maktabah al-Ma'arif, (2000), 128.

¹⁵ Bensaïd, Benaouda, Fadila Grine, Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, and Mohd Yakub Zulkifli Mohd Yusoff. "Ethico-spiritual dimensions of charity: An Islamic perspective."

¹⁶ Al-Quran: 2: 217

¹⁷ Al-'Izz, I.'A.S., Shajarat al-Ma'arifwal-Ahwalwa. Salih al-Aqwalwal-A'mal, 1st Ed. Saudi Arabia: Dar Majid 'Asiri,. (2000). 179.

Therefore, *sadaqa* is the easiest means in collecting resources that could be in wealth or kind for the benefit of human beings. While *sadaqa* is an action that need not adhere to any procedural arrangement, however, as a benevolent act in Islam that upholds transparency and accountability, *sadaqa* should be governed effectively to ensure its distribution and management meet the purpose in the case of humanitarian aid and services.¹⁸

Waqf

Waqf is a wealth-sharing mechanism for the benefit of disadvantaged people, emphasized Asmak.¹⁹ It is a private possession or asset collected from wealth that has been acquired by any form that has been put under injunction from any kind of transaction including sale, inheritance, *hibah* (grant), and *wasiyyah* (will) while its physical source remains intact and unchanged. *Waqf*'s characteristic is perpetuity, which means it could not be transferred to another form of transaction permanently. It must be managed for the sake of goodness at large. Due to that, *waqf* typically applies to non-perishable properties whose benefits and usufruct can be extracted without consuming the property itself. Additionally, *waqf* is also known as *sadaqah jariyyah* (running charity) that is distinct from ordinary one-shot *sadaqah*. It also unlike *zakah*, because *waqf* is a voluntary, permanent, irrevocable dedication of a portion of ones' wealth (in cash or kind) to Allah alone. And *waqf* beneficiaries are like *sadaqa* where needs are not restricted to Muslims alone, but at the same time the fruit of *waqf* must be utilized under the *Syarī'ah* compliant.²⁰

Extensive studies prove that *waqf* has a positive effect on human development including humanitarian aid. Meaning that, *waqf* positively influences life-changing social benefits in the long run.²¹ For example, health care (hospital) and mosques are the frequent projects funded by *waqf* funds. As emphasized by Abuarqub and Isabel (2009), hospitals were one of the greatest legacies of *waqf* in Islam. According to Sayali, the first Islamic *waqf* hospital was built in Damascus 76 years after the death of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).²² The mission of the hospital is taking care of sick people, curing those afflicted with chronic diseases. In fact, the hospital does not charge its patients, added Sayili.²³ In the current setting of humanitarianism, health care and medicine are the most famous sub-sectors of *awqaf* (*waqf* institution). Piot found that

¹⁸ Wan Shahdila Shah, Shahar, Shafii Zurina, Ahmad Nurul Wajhi, Bahari Nor Fadilah, Ahmad Khairul Anuar, and M. Suhaimi Farhana. "Factors Affecting Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives in Private Companies Listed on Bursa Malaysia: A Qualitative Study." Paper presented in 2nd International Conference on Economics and Banking 2016 (2nd ICEB). 24-25 May 2016. 45-56.

¹⁹ Asmak Ab Rahman,. "Peranan wakaf dalam pembangunan ekonomi umat Islam dan aplikasinya di Malaysia." *Jurnal Syaria* 17, no. 1 (2009): 113-152.

²⁰ Azliza Azrah Mohd Zakaria, A. R. R. Samad, and Zurina Shafii. "Venture Philanthropy-Waqf Practices And Its Implementation: Scenario In Malaysia." *International Journal of Business, Economics and Law* 1 (2012): 108-115.

²¹ Hassan, Shafiqul, Yusuff Jelili Amuda, and Rehana Parveen. "Persecuted Muslim Minority: Zakat, Waqf, And Sadaqah As Financial Instrument For Human Development."

²² Sayili, Aydin. "The emergence of the prototype of the modern hospital in medieval Islam." *Studies in the History of Medicine* 4 (2006): 114-15

²³ Ibid.

medical humanitarianism has emerged as a significant global agenda that needs attention from all.²⁴

Malaysia And Islamic Humanitarianism: An Overview

It is generally well-known that Malaysia is very supportive in humanitarian aid beyond its boundaries. Malaysia's undivided commitment to humanitarian aid could be seen since the time of Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, Malaysia's first Prime Minister (1957-1970), particularly towards Palestinians. Malaysia's commitment and significant contributions to Palestinian issues has resulted in setting up the PLO Office in Kuala Lumpur in 1974, which later was granted Embassy status in 1989. Furthermore, Malaysia's effortlessly making the issue of Palestinians as the main agenda while attending the UN Assembly, OIC Summit, and other international human rights conferences.²⁵

By consistently of putting Islamic issues at the forefront, Malaysia has become a well-known advocator for Islamic causes, locally and globally. Nair (2013) noted that Malaysia's domestic politics is in keeping with holding that Islam is a federal religion and Malay-Muslims and *Bumiputra* are the majority group²⁶. As noted previously, care and concern for the plight of Muslim minorities around the world as one Muslim *ummah* is always a priority for Malaysian government and Malaysian Muslim movements.²⁷ This has caused a growing number of Malaysian Islamic volunteerism in humanitarian aid within the context of "brotherhood of all nations." To date, almost 40% of registered NGOs in Malaysia are purposely for humanitarian causes, both locally and globally.

Beside Malaysia's active participation in humanitarian aid under the cause of Islam in its foreign policy and for one *ummah* notion, historically, Ahmad Fauzi found that Malay-Muslims identity is always at highest concern to their Islamic activism, rather than "Malaysian" identity in general.²⁸ It is strongly noted here that after 60 years under one ruling coalition party – *Barisan Nasional* (BN) – as the government, Malaysians choose a new coalition to rule the country named *Pakatan Harapan* (PH) on May 9, 2018. PH is a coalition of three main parties that is no longer exclusive to one race in one party; rather inclusivity of different races and religions in one party are the pinnacle to its agenda. Due to that, the idea of "*Bangsa Malaysia*" or united Malaysian nation had already blended in the formation of the new government of Malaysia.

²⁴ Piot, Peter. *Medical humanitarianism: ethnographies of practice*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). ix-x.

²⁵ Asmady Idris. "Malaysian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and humanitarian issues in Gaza, Palestine." *International Journal of West Asian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2012).

²⁶ Article 160 (2) of Malaysia's Federal Constitution defines "Malay" is a person who professes Islam, habitually speaks Malay language and conforms to Malay custom.

²⁷ Nair, Shanti. *Islam in Malaysian foreign policy*. New York: Routledge (2013). 26-35.

²⁸ Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid. "Transnational Islam in Malaysia." In Peter Mansdaviile, *Transnational Islam in South and Southeast Asia: Movements, networks and conflict dynamics*. National Bureau of Asian Research. (2009). 141-65.

Having said that, however, not all agreed with the idea of *Bangsa Malaysia* as a definition to a multi-ethnic and multi-religion country like Malaysia, especially to the majority group which is the Malays. Five months after taking over the government, Zaharah Sulaiman, a history researcher claimed *Bangsa Malaysia* slogan could erode racial identities rather than used as a tool to foster national unity.²⁹ Her argument refers to the recent development of Malaysia politic where the biggest Malay party – UMNO – had loss the 14th general election. This indicates the loss of Malay power throughout Malasia. Accordingly, Shamsul found that the notion of *Bangsa Malaysia* or a united Malaysian nation, is a perfect tool to foster Malaysian economically, socially, culturally and educationally to a greater level since its announcement in 1991.³⁰ Although the concept is designed to be aligned with the modern agenda of Malasia's future, Mariappan concluded that "ethnically neutral citizenship is scarcely possible, hitherto for the betterment of the Malays".³¹ It is because 'Malay-ness' is often at higher demand than 'Malaysian-ness'.

In that sense, it could be said that Malays are nevertheless the backbone of humanitarianism in Malaysia where Islam and the concept of one *ummah* is central to the worldview of Malaysia. On the other hand, the concept of *ummah* justifies nationalism for the Malays, but not to Malaysia which has other races as its citizens.

Global Peace Mission Malaysia (GPM): A Case Study

GPM is a Malaysian Islamic Humanitarian NGO under the Trusteeship Law of Malaysia. They assembled on September 26, 2001 in response to the sufferings of the Afghans under intense US military occupation. To date, GPM had deployed its volunteers to almost 30 countries in the purpose of helping and sending aid to the needy, mostly Muslim minority areas. As inspired to achieve universal peace across borders through advocacy and humanitarian services, GPM consistently stays on to help out with long-term objectives in education, economics, agriculture, health, community development and socio-economic empowerment programs benefiting victims even though in war-zone areas.³²

Historically, the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia or ABIM, an influential Islamic movement in Malaysia since 1970s was responsible for GPM's establishment. Such action was taken due to ABIM's participation on the global stage which focused more on advocacy and pressure, rather than giving help on the ground. In doing so, ABIM decided to set up a new agency, GPM, in the hopes of optimizing the idealism of humanitarian aid at local and

²⁹ Jerry Choong. "Historian claims 'Bangsa Malaysia' erodes racial identities, especially the Malays". *MalayMail*. October 22, 2018. Available at <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2018/10/02/historian-claims-bangsa-malaysia-erodes-racial-identities-especially-the-ma/1678482>. Accessed on October 24, 2019.

³⁰ Shamsul, A. B. "In search of 'bangsa Malaysia': Politics of identity in multiethnic Malaysia." *Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies* 27 (1995): 57-68.

³¹ Mariappan, Kntayya. "Ethnicity, Malay nationalism, and the question of Bangsa Malaysia." In Fenton, Steve, and Stephen May. *Ethnonational identities*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, (2002) 198-226.

³² Global Peace Mission Malaysia (GPM). For more detail, see <https://www.gpm.com.my/about-us>

international levels, also to attract donations and attention from the public and private toward humanitarian issues (Annual Report, 2002). Though, GPM is not a separate entity to ABIM where its Chairman must be a President of ABIM as stated in the regulation.

As a case study, this paper will demonstrate GPM's works in humanitarian aid in the following points: partnering in new initiative work; leading international commissions; leading in the impactful and sustainable projects; and providing humanitarian aid training to volunteers and advising governments. These four criteria have made GPM a leading Islamic Humanitarian NGO from Malaysia.

1) Partnering in New Initiative Works

The success of sending 85 ambulances to Syria in 2017 and 2018 under the Unity Convoy Project is an extraordinary achievement for GPM.³³ This convoy involved 20 volunteers and relief workers from different Malaysian NGOs and was led by Human Aid, a UK-based humanitarian NGO. According to the report, these 85 ambulances were used to serve approximately 8500 patients in a period of six months³⁴ and was recognized as the world's biggest ambulance convoy.³⁵

Creating awareness among the public is one of the important roles played by GPM in both local and global platforms. Having worldwide partnerships through various networking channels - mainly with young groups in private and government sectors - GPM frequently has been invited to organize academic seminars or forums on the current issues related to peace, humanitarian aid, and humanitarianism agenda. Through this academic platform, substantial actions such as a referendum or official note from experts were gathered and drafted and later submitted to the respective government as part of showing solidarity and concern.³⁶

2) Leading of International Commission

GPM also has been recognized in leading an international commission that gathered worldwide humanitarian NGOs who worked for a common goal. There were two main appointments that put GPM at the center of global humanitarian works; first, GPM was appointed as the Commissioner of Humanity, Unity and Solidarity of the Union of NGOs of the Islamic World (UNIW) in 2006 and secondly, GPM was appointed as a member of the Organization of the

³³ Syed Azwan Syed Ismail. "Sukarelawan Unity Convoy Malaysia Ditahan". *Berita Harian Online*. Sabtu, 22 April 2017. Accessed on October 21st, 2019. Available at <https://www.bharian.com.my/node/274554>

³⁴ For more detail see https://www.launchgood.com/project/unity_convoy#!/ Accessed on October 21st, 2019.

³⁵ n.a., "Malaysia volunteers in world's biggest ambulance convoy to Syria return home". *Al-Arabiya English*. May 5th, 2017. Accessed on October 21st, 2019. Available at <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/variety/2017/05/05/Malaysian-volunteers-in-world-s-biggest-ambulance-convoy-to-Syria-return-home.html>

³⁶ Kai Hui. "Isu Uighur: NGO Islam bantah depan kedutaan Cina". *Malaysiakini*. July 5, 2019. Available at <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/482607>. Accessed on October 21, 2019.

Islamic Conference Humanitarian Forum (OICHF) as a recognition of its efforts over twenty countries, explained by Ahmad Fauzi.³⁷

3) Leading in Impactful and Sustainable Project

According to Nur Atika and Fatin (2019), GPM has volunteered their medical and social teams and also actively participated in the humanitarian aid missions.³⁸ By having various initiatives and partnerships with NGOs, such as the Malaysian Field Hospital (MFH) in Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh); Human Aid (United Kingdom) in sending ambulances; and the clean water project in Sudan were among the impactful and sustainable projects led by GPM (GPM Annual Report, 2018).

According to Fahmi (2019), such projects need continuous planning and sustainable financial support every year.³⁹ It demands a skilled group of volunteers who are able to lead the projects and to solve problems. According to Lewis sustainable funds would be a long-term challenge in humanitarian assistance that possibly influences the partnership and leadership structure within and between organization(s).⁴⁰

4) Providing Humanitarian Aid Training and Advising Government

Having well-trained volunteers on the ground of crisis area or war-zones by empowering the youth to involve in the sustainable development project is an important aspect to any government who gave concern on humanitarian issues. In doing so, Malaysian government through its Ministry of Youth and Sport (KBS) and its agency, Malaysian Youth Council (MBM) has taken an impactful initiative by setting up MyCorps. Today, MyCorps is a co-joint program between KBS-MBM and relevant humanitarian NGOs like Yayasan Salam, GPM, Malaysian Relief Agency, Youth Council Mosques and other voluntary bodies within and outside the country. MyCorps is a program for groups of youths who are well-trained and skilled volunteers in humanitarian aid and re-developing community project, explained Jufitri.⁴¹ Siti Raba'ah *et al* emphasized MyCorps aims to promote and enhance the spirit of volunteerism among youth through their involvement at the local and international levels, as well as create awareness in youth about issues related to domestic and international peace, war, conflict, cohesion,

³⁷ Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid. "Transnational Islam in Malaysia."

³⁸ Nur Atika Hairi and Fatin Nur Majdina Nordin. "The United Nations (UN) and ASEAN Role with Malaysia Reaction in Handling Violence Towards Muslim Minority in Myanmar: A Case Study of Rohingya". Paper presented at International Conference on Religion, Governance and Sustainable Development (ICRGD2019), October 16-17, 2019. International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Malaysia.

³⁹ Ahmad Fahmi Mohd Samsudin. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Global Peace Mission Malaysia (GPM). Virtual interview on October 2, 2019.

⁴⁰ Lewis, David. "Development NGOs and the challenge of partnership: changing relations between North and South." *Social policy & administration* 32, no. 5 (1998): 501-512.

⁴¹ Jufitri explained that MyCorps idea was initiated from US Peace Corps program that established since 1961 and successfully sent 235,000 young American to more than 141 countries for 27 months long that consumed \$410 billion in total.

education, disaster and health.⁴² After eight years on the ground, MyCorps had served nine countries; Lubnan, Jordan, Cambodia, Turkey, Bangladesh, Syria, Palestine, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya.

There are three main courses that GPM is responsible for in MyCorps training program. The objective is to prepare the volunteers' readiness, to shape their understanding in inter-faith relations, and to provide training to assist on the ground, added Fahmi.⁴³ It is understood that through MyCorps missions, Malaysian youth volunteers found positive improvement in leadership potential, communication skills, confidence and self-esteem emotional stability within themselves.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Undeniably the consistency and determination of the Malaysian government in the area of humanitarianism is a national priority. As a Muslim majority country (while respecting the diversity of its citizens), Islam and *ummah* is a major priority to the country and to its citizens, although this does not negate the existence of a broad range of contributions among Malaysian citizens over the issue of humanitarian aid and peace-keeping purposes. Thus, in practice, Islam and the concept of *ummah* have served far more as an instrument of humanitarianism rather than as an influence in foreign policy.

As such, Islamic humanitarian NGOs like GPM need to be visible and vibrant in championing the issues of human rights at the national and international level. GPM is a leader among humanitarian actors in Malaysia. With sustainable funding and effective leadership, GPM and other Islamic humanitarian NGOs will provide aid and assistance to ensure a more universal well-being and peace in Malaysia and other countries.

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INTERVIEW

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