



**INTERVIEW conducted on 20.01.2019**

**by**

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***CREATION OF THE PEACE THROUGH THE ACTS***  
***AND NOT JUST THROUGH THE TALKS***

**interview with Dr. Nasharudin Mat Isa**

1) Please tell us more about your education and career history since beginning till now

In terms of education, I hold a Bachelor's Degree in Islamic Jurisprudence from the University of Jordan, an MA in Comparative Law from the International Islamic University of Malaysia and a PhD in Education (Leadership) at the Awang Had Salleh Graduate School of Arts and Science, University Utara Malaysia (UUM). Career-wise, I started as a lecturer, lecturing at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), then Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (also known as National University of Malaysia(UKM)) before venturing into politics and becoming a two-term Malaysian Member of Parliament. Of more recent, I headed my own Foundation focusing on socio-educational activities, prior to becoming the CEO of the now-defunct Global Movement of Moderates Foundation (GMMF).

Upon the latter's closure, I set-up the Wasatiyah Centre for Peace (WCP) feeling that the message of 'wasatiyah' and/or moderation is still very much required within the field of peace-activism.

## 2) What is Wasatiyah Centre of Peace?

WCP aims to integrate a "culture of peace" discourse, and part of it is through the message of 'wasatiyah' which also bears similar connotations in other religions and cultures of the world, i.e. 'the golden mean', balance, moderation to name a few. Of a particular objective, the organisation seeks to be a centre which endeavours for the promotion and imbueing of such a culture of peace, and this will admittedly be a process for the long haul. It is not something that is visible or felt overnight. The measures that we see currently being implemented, be they hard or soft-wise, are there to address the issues and drivers of terrorism and violent-extremism, but in the long-term, it is only the ones through education and cultivating a culture of peace, of excellence and civilisation can we address the problems of conflicts and violent-extremism that we see now today.

This is what WCP aspires to, and it is why we are looking to cooperate and collaborate with many a numerous organisations to that end. We have participated in a number of engagements with the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC), ranging from CVE/PVE to intercultural discourses programs, and as of now, also looking to develop concrete and meaningful collaborative programs with UNAOC - especially events and programs within this parts of the world.

## 3) Why the need for promoting world peace? - where is the world heading to?

Faith or belief-wise, all religions essentially teaches and preaches upon the path of peace, non-violence and compassion amongst one other. However, it is only some segments of individuals or groups – and a small minority at that – that manipulate the teachings for the purposes of their own agendas, and thus recruiting or radicalising others in the process. It is here that the conflicts lie in. And it is here that we need to address the crux of the matter – of the hearts and minds. Messages of peace, of the proper teachings of the religions need be done less our civilisation fall into the abyss (and this is where the world may head or lead to if conflicts, violence and terrorism be left unattended).

On the other hand, in terms of policy-makers and international organisations, they too can and must play a part in promoting world peace by stressing and acting

upon the need to strengthen international understanding, and cooperation to enhance security and stability within the various regions of the globe. All of these have to be done within the framework of international resolutions and the necessity for respect for sovereignty of States, the local communities as well as cultural contexts.

#### 4) What is wasatiyah.org doing in Malaysia and on global scenario?

We are still new, operationally-speaking. As of the moment, in Malaysia, we are simply conducting collaborative researches focusing on our four focus agendas of peace. Realising on the need to enrich the discourse of ‘wasatiyah’ within the field of peace-activism, we are planning to release a number of research-based publications to that very end.

At a global scenario, it is simply in trying to actively participate (online or on the ground) in delivering presentations/talks/opinions as invited by those within the global peace-activism communities, as well as international organisations. I believe we have experiences to share with others, and likewise, to learn. I must add here, that one of our aspirations is to maximise our utilisation of the Internet, or social media rather, as efficiently and effectively as possible, given the impact it is able to rear. There are a few programs in the pipeline, with regards to online-based engagements that we are currently devising and looking to implement soon, which cuts across our focus initiatives of peaceful coexistence, civic education & CVE/PVE) and scope of approaches (capacity building. researches and publications as well as consultation &-community relations). Among our upcoming activities being planned are a few research-based workshops, publications, video documentaries and a conference.

#### 5) What are the differences between concept of peace in Islam and other conflict resolution theories and practices?

The concept of peace in Islam, well, it occupies a central-focus (and interrelated) among the other precepts such as justice, dignity etc. The word Salam – which denotes peace – originate from the same root word as Islam. One Islamic interpretation is that personal (and communal peace) is attained through submission to Allah. Thus peace in Islam, for Muslims, essentially begins and ends with God (Allah). Any other forms of transgression will invariably violates this sense of peace.

This would be the one and obvious difference with secular (and possibly other religions') conflict resolution theories and practices.

Besides that, the rest would be seemingly similar, generally speaking, of respect, and proper knowledge which is required to mete out justice. It is for this very reason that Islam promotes no compulsion in religion, a freedom of others' to live by their religious choices. This consistently cultivates a sense of respect of one another and to live in peaceful coexistence in which justice serves as the common denominator. The problems, or conflicts that we see today, is invariably a result of injustices and grievances that have been left unfettered.

#### 6) Is peace education necessary now?

It is very much necessary, more so in the current context. Throughout my experiences and deliberations, we believe it is high-time that peace education and those of similar relevance, be promoted actively within the education sector to that of civil society at large. For an example, UNESCO has its project – called Global Citizenship Education – and it is one example of a significant initiative which should and need to be advocated by parties at various levels. As for us, and somewhat quite similar, our initiative is on activities promoting peaceful coexistences of the faiths and communities. Thus, to answer your question, yes, I have no doubt whatsoever on the necessity of peace education.

#### 7) What are your hopes and dreams for world peace to exist?

Primarily speaking, and to be honest, peaceful coexistence. That would be it. During one of my previous working engagements, in Washington DC, I was afforded the opportunity to see a beautiful sight – where peaceful coexistence was in action. It was on a Friday, naturally, there was an issue of Friday prayers, and it was heart-warming to see Jews and Muslims coexisting, with the former allowing the latter use of their synagogue in performing their Friday prayers due to the limitations of space. The same show of tolerance was experienced when I visited Perth in Australia, where a Church was opened for Friday prayers. Malaysia too demonstrated something similar, when one of its state was hit by the flood, the musalla and mosques there opened its doors to flood victims to seek shelter, regardless of religion and race.

These actions are commendable when done with mutual respect and tolerance between two or more parties, and with no ulterior motives or agendas. They indicate the beauty of coexistence, when and how it is conducted with no personal agendas or vested interests are not part of the equation. Of course, it is probably such a utopian concept, but it has to start somewhere, and there must be the political and social will to do so.

8) Please add links to your articles and papers presented at UNO and other conferences and seminars in relation to world peace.

For further information and readings on articles as well as papers presented, kindly refer to <https://www.wasatiyah.org/the-president-and-ceo/>

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**Thank you very much for this exclusive interview for DIOGEN pro culture magazine, respectable NASHARUDIN MAT ISA.**

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