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Subject: Malaysia: Assessing Local Foreign Fighter CVE Opportunities

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Subject: Malaysia: Assessing Local Foreign Fighter CVE Opportunities

- (SBU) SUMMARY: Per Ref. A, following is an overview of community drivers of foreign fighter radicalization in Malaysia, as well as credible voices seeking to counter ISIL recruitment narratives. Pro-ISIL propaganda in Malaysia is disseminated both online as well as through traditional face-to-face interactions, including in mosques, private religious schools, and universities. Pro-ISIL websites targeting Malaysians emphasize several common themes, including frustration with local Islamic authorities, a disdainful view of the West, hatred of Shias, and the portrayal of ISIL territory as a utopia. These sites also utilize innovative graphic design and draw on current events in Malaysia to attract supporters. An increasing number of credible voices are emerging in Malaysia that are actively working to undermine ISIL propaganda. Post is supporting a variety of CVE programs which enable us to expand our networks and forge new partnerships, including with the private sector (Ref. B). END SUMMARY.

**COMMUNITY DRIVERS OF FOREIGN FIGHTER RADICALIZATION**

**Known Locations of Pro-ISIL Activity**

- (SBU) Royal Malaysian Police have arrested approximately 110 ISIL supporters since April 2014 from areas scattered throughout the country. According to an October 2014 report from the Open Source Center (attached), ISIL supporters were identified training in palm oil plantations, abandoned buildings, and remote jungles in six of the 13 states of Malaysia: Selangor, Johor, Perak, Pahang, Kelantan, and Negeri Sembilan. Minister of Defense Hishammuddin and other senior officials frequently raise their concerns about Eastern Sabah as a hotspot for militant activity, which included the arrest of a Sabah-based civil servant allegedly recruiting for ISIL. While many of those arrested are men under the age of 40, their educational and socio-economic backgrounds are widely varied, and include civil servants, soldiers, professors, students, shopkeepers, unskilled laborers, as well as a handful of women and children.

**Online Radicalization and Recruitment**

- (SBU) In addition to glamorizing violence and vilifying the West, ISIL recruitment propagandists frequently draw on popular Malaysian culture and current events. One notable example circulating on social media in early 2015 is the cartoon below, showing a “virtuous” Muslim Malay girl supporting ISIL. The cartoon shows her in contrast to “amoral” girls idolizing K-Pop stars, whom Malaysian religious authorities (absurdly) accused of sexually molesting their teenage fans who had simply hugged the stars on stage following a concert. (Note: The URLs listed below were active as of July 14, 2015. End Note.)



Top picture: “In Aleppo Syria, women protect their honor and also take up arms to defend Islam.”  
Bottom Picture: “While in Malaysia... they allow their honor to be destroyed on stage.”

**Azzam Media**

URL: [www.azzammedia.net](http://www.azzammedia.net)

Azzam Media describes itself as the “Malay Language Media Division of the Islamic Caliphate” and is the main propaganda outlet for the Malaysian-Indonesian ISIL unit known as “Majmua al-Arkjability” (Malay Archipelago Combat Unit, also known as Katibah Nusantara). The website carries news reports, articles, photographs, videos, and audio messages on ISIL activities, and often uses young children in propaganda videos. The site features profiles and obituaries of deceased ISIL members from Malaysia and Indonesia, such as Abu Jarir al Malaysiy, Abu Sayyaf Al Indunisiy, and Abu Muhammad Al Indunisiy. Azzam Media translates Arabic language ISIL materials into Bahasa, and creates propaganda videos of young Malay men learning Islamic theology and training in military arts. Katibah Nusantara boasts of a supposed battlefield victory against Kurdish-held territory in April 2015, in an attempt to attract new recruits.

**Revolusi Islam – Malaysia**

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Revolusi-Islam-Malaysia/731004626932889>  
 Start date: March 8, 2014; Most Recent Post: June 7, 2015  
 Page Followers: 3,673

Revolusi Islam – Malaysia (RIM) defines itself as an Islamic Revolutionary Party seeking war with the West, Shias, Israel and moderate Sunnis. RIM considers Malaysian democracy a “creation of the invaders” and seeks to create a transnational Islamic State in Southeast Asia. The site glorifies Malaysian ISIL fighters such as Mohd Lotfi Ariffin, who was killed in Syria in September 2014. RIM’s postings are dedicated to both condemning America and castigating Muslims who work within Western democracy or non-Islamic institutions. The site also features inflammatory videotaped sermons of clerics, such as Indonesian Habib Rizieq (the leader of a stridently sectarian anti-vice organization), which received over 18,000 views. In April RIM posted a Q&A in Bahasa with a self-proclaimed ISIL member known as ‘Arrival Martyr,’ who lauds ISIL’s martial, administrative and theological accomplishments; points to supposed schools, power plants, and higher paid salaries in its territory; and claims that ISIL has a compassionate social justice program, taking care of widows, the poor, refugees, orphans and the disabled. The posting also details how ISIL will annihilate the Shia and the Iraqi government; institute a caliphate for the protection of the global Muslim population; and aid Palestine by declaring war on Israel.



Malaysian ISIL fighter Mohd Lotfi Ariffin, killed in Syria in September 2014.  
 “Unite and reconcile as one congregation... do not divide and factionalize.”

#### **Diary of a Muhajirah: Bird of Jannah**

Tumblr: <http://diary-of-a-muhajira.tumblr.com/>  
 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/diaryofaMuhajira/timeline>  
 Tumblr Start Date: September 13, 2014; Tumblr Most Recent Post: June 29, 2015  
 Facebook Start Date: September 13, 2014; Facebook Most Recent Post: June 24, 2015  
 Page Followers: 2,455

“Diary of a Muhajirah” is run by a 27 year-old female doctor from Malaysia, Shams Umm al Baraa’ (al-Maliyyi). Shams claims to live in the ISIL occupied Syrian town of Slouk and to be married to an ISIL fighter from Morocco. While blogging her personal experience as a submissive ISIL housewife, Shams gives advice on life as a woman in ISIL territory. Shams often uses popular images and cartoons to convey her messages, including images from Disney films as well as pictures of a young Osama Bin Laden. She defines ISIL as a bastion of diversity and social welfare and is vocal on subjects ranging from racism in the United States, Islamophobia in Europe and poverty in non-Western countries. She also writes of her disgust for Western culture (perhaps with the exception of Disney movies), hatred of Shias, and a deep disregard for moderate Muslims, whom she refers to as “Coco-Puff Muslims.”



ISIL propaganda targeting women from Shams al-Maliyyi’s “Diary of a Muhajira”

#### **Khalifah Daulah Islamiyyah**

URL: <http://daulahislamiyyah.com/>  
 Start date: July 31, 2014

Khalifah Daulah Islamiyyah is jointly operated by a Malaysian named Abu Jaisyi and an Indonesian named Ibrahim Al Indonesie. The website serves as a Bahasa language pro-ISIL news station, providing content which both aims to agitate and inspire its audience. Online since 2014, the website shows graphic images and videos of dead, dying and wounded children in Syria and Palestine, labeling these as “Western crimes.” Khalifah Daulah Islamiyyah counts among its enemies the West, Shia (whom they call “devils”), and liberal democracy. The website describes itself as a “Media Office” for ISIL and uses violent images and colloquial language seeking to appeal to young men. The website features links under its “Jihad Zone” to videos of training and frontline operations in Indonesian Timor, Iraq and Syria. The page also draws on popular video game imagery, including superimposing the ISIL flag onto a cover of a Call of Duty video game and re-labeling it “Call of Jihad.”

#### **Facebook Militants**

Salman Rahim and Abu Aydan Malayzi (hometown: Ampang, suburb of Kuala Lumpur)  
<https://www.facebook.com/salman.rahim.33>  
<https://www.facebook.com/syazany.salem?fref=ts>  
 Start Date: January 2010; Most Recent Post: June 2015  
 Page Followers and Friends: Approximately 1000

Salman Rahim and Abu Aydan are Malaysians currently fighting with ISIL, according to their Facebook pages, where they describe life and work in ISIL territory. Most of their pictures show them with other Southeast Asian militants, indicating they are part of Katibah Nusantara – the ISIL unit consisting primarily of Malaysian and Indonesian recruits. They make no grandiose claims about the social welfare, theology or religiosity of ISIL, but glamorize the violence of militant activities.

Fakro Ruzi

Hometown: Kedah

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<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100901189055528&fref=ts>

Start Date: January 2010; Most Recent Post: July 12, 2015  
Page Followers and Friends: Approximately 4168

A long time propagandist for ISIL and a volunteer for "Daulah Islamiya," Fakro Ruzi is a disciple of deceased Malaysian ISIL fighter Mohd Lotfi Ariffin and publicizes crises in the Islamic world, violence against Muslims and calls to rally behind the Islamic State. A staunch supporter of political Islam, Fakro Ruzi shares images of ISIL memorabilia and clothing, and showcases the social media accounts of other Malaysian ISIL fighters, such as Salman Rahim.

**Face-to-Face Radicalization and Recruitment**

- 4. (SBU) Beyond the prevalent use of social media, ISIL recruiters continue to ply their trade the old-fashioned way, through personal interaction at mosques, madrasas, universities and other gatherings. One contact told us about a person he believes to be innocent who was arrested with a group of new "friends" in his house in Kedah. Supposedly, unbeknownst to that individual, those "friends" were actually ISIL recruiters who had specifically targeted him for his community activism and religious piety. The recruiters had approached him expressing interest in community engagement, and began testing his physical prowess by inviting him on hikes in the countryside. He reportedly had no idea they were evaluating his suitability to join ISIL when police arrested the group.

**Privately Funded Religious Schools - Madrasah Nurul Hidayah, Kedah**

- 5. (SBU) Founded by Mohd Zainon Ariffin and his late younger brother Mohd Lotfi Ariffin (killed fighting with ISIL), Madrasah Nurul Hidayah in Kedah is a conservative Islamic school, that was the subject of a January 14, 2015 [New York Times video report](#) titled "The Jihadist in Our Family." Despite claims by Mohd Zainon – and, subsequently, the Malaysian government – that the school does not preach violence, the video report shows teachers and students lauding Mohd Lotfi's "martyrdom" and acceptance of radical Islam.
- 6. (SBU) There are numerous privately funded religious schools, like Nurul Hidayah, located around the country especially in the Malay belt states of Kelantan, Kedah, Terengganu and Perlis. These madrasas do not receive funding from the government and therefore do not follow the national Islamic studies curriculum, nor are they subject to any supervision by the Ministry of Education. On July 2, police arrested an ISIL operative who studied in a privately funded madrasa in Kelantan. The government has publicly denied, however, that religious schools are hotbeds for promoting violent extremism.

**Universities**

- 7. (SBU) Malaysian authorities are concerned about violent extremist propaganda and recruitment on university campuses, both from professors and students. In July 2014, police released photos enlisting the public's help to locate Dr. Mahmud Ahmad, a senior lecturer at University Malaya, who was an ISIL recruiter. Post, through a CT/CVE grant, is supporting the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Counterterrorism (SEARCCT) on a grant to provide student leaders from several major universities with training to counter violent extremist ideologies through peer-to-peer messaging. SEARCCT also has a long-standing university lecture series as part of its broader CVE outreach efforts.

**CREDIBLE VOICES THAT RESONATE**

- 8. (SBU) Through CT/CVE grants, the Resident Legal Advisor (RLA) program, and Public Diplomacy (PD) activities, Post is actively working with a variety of credible voices against violent extremism. Our current CVE grantees include the [redacted] SEARCCT, The Asia Foundation, and local human rights NGO [redacted]. RLA has conducted several CVE programs bringing together credible voices from civil society and the private sector with government officials, religious authorities, academics, and others. (Ref. C) Through its public outreach activities PD is engaged with a variety of organizations promoting tolerance, diversity, and moderation. Following is a sampling of organizations that are either currently involved in CVE-types of programs, or could be utilized in the future:

[redacted] The mission of [redacted] is to spread the knowledge of Islam through creative methods. The organization believes in translating theological discussions into practical strategies to create a positive impact and promote social change. Activities include open dialogues, panel discussions regarding documentaries, and photography exhibits. The head of the organization has attended several Embassy Ifars and is going to the United States in August through the International Visitors Leadership Program.  
Website: [redacted] Facebook: 1,206 Fans

[redacted] The [redacted] is a Kuala Lumpur based think tank focused on promoting an intellectual movement among Malaysian youth. Founded in 2009, the think tank promotes Islamic discourse through hosting dialogue, workshops and panel discussions that focus on democracy, liberty and social justice. The head of the organization, [redacted] was among the group of civil society leaders that met with President Obama in April 2014. He writes op-eds and policy papers and occasionally organizes events promoting tolerance and moderation.  
Website: [redacted]

[redacted]: The [redacted] is a youth group that promotes Islamic fellowship around the Kuala Lumpur area. The group focuses on creating an informal environment among youth to promote dialogue, community service initiatives and debate topics that resonate with youth in the area. The head of the organization is a key influencer among youth. They have youth gatherings and hold discussions among peers on the challenges that Muslims feel in a fun and judgment-free environment.  
Website: [http://\[redacted\]](http://[redacted])

[redacted] was founded by a young Malay [redacted] who uses Twitter, YouTube and Facebook to teach English and volunteerism. With nearly 100,000 Twitter users following his witty English language instruction, he also spreads messages of moderation and tolerance, especially among youth in rural and semi-urban areas of Malaysia. He has participated in our counter-messaging programs with [redacted].  
Twitter followers: 96,314 Facebook: 1,425 fans

[redacted] The chief aim of the [redacted] is to promote charity among vulnerable populations, regardless of religion or race. Activities include weekly Quran reading, supporting educational grants, implementing disaster relief projects and providing food and clothing for orphanages. Trustees for the [redacted] range from revered Islamic scholars to business men and human rights activists. Besides running an [redacted] also does weekly radio shows and conducts spiritual talks – all aimed at promoting moderation and rejecting extremist ideas. [redacted] has attended Embassy Ifars and several of our interfaith roundtables.  
Website: [http://\[redacted\]](http://[redacted])

[redacted] is a group of Muslim women committed to promoting the rights of women within the framework of Islam as based on the principles of equality, justice and freedom enjoined by the Quran. Its vision is to be a progressive and democratic society that upholds freedom of expression, gender equality and social justice for all. It has a holistic mission to empower women to be advocates for change. Its leader, [redacted] was among the group of civil society leaders that met with President Obama in April 2014.  
Website: [http://\[redacted\]](http://[redacted])

[redacted] has set to carry out its "reclaim Malaysia" which is aimed at mobilizing and empowering people to return to the founding principles of Malaysia, including tolerance, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence.

[redacted] is a nascent NGO studying how religion impacts multicultural societies. Its founders have participated in our counter-messaging programming with [redacted] and have expressed interest in other CVE activities.

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Attachments: PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI *ROUTINE*; NCTC WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*; ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE *ROUTINE*  
Malaysia Map of Militant Group Activities.pdf

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