

Sunday Interview: Fatwa on 'pengkid' to prevent lesbianism

By ANIZA DAMIS

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EXACTLY one month ago, the National Fatwa Council made a decision against women who dressed like men, denouncing it as haram. This has been met with anger, protest, and mainly, confusion, as to what exactly it is that the fatwa condemns. ANIZA DAMIS speaks to Malaysian Department of Islamic Development (Jakim) director-general Datuk Wan Mohamad Sheikh Abd Aziz to get a clearer picture of the issue. (This is a translation of the interview, which was conducted in Bahasa Malaysia) **Q: What is the actual definition of “pengkid”?**

A: Pengkid refers to a married woman or maiden whose appearance or image is like that of a man. Although this also includes the dressing of the person and not just the way she behaves, the way of dressing is just one aspect of what makes a pengkid.

A woman may be dressed as a woman, but her behaviour may be like a man, or it might be a combination of this. She might also have a sexual desire for women.

This brings it “hampir” (close) to the practice of lesbianism.

Q: Is it close to, or is it actually lesbianism?

A: We can't say that all people who are pengkid are lesbians. That wouldn't be right. That's why I say it is “hampir”.

Hampir means she doesn't do that act, but she is heading that way. For instance, Islam forbids people from coming close to zina. That means, not only is the act forbidden, but any act that may lead to the actual act is also forbidden.

I believe there is no religion that allows lesbianism or homosexuality. But anything that can drive or lead towards it should also be stopped. So, this is the culture that we are trying to stop.

Actually, we are trying to save these women (from becoming lesbians).

Q: When you translate this fatwa into English, the word “tomboy” is used instead of “pengkid”. “Tomboy” in English doesn't have a sexual connotation. So, what do you mean by “dressing like a man”?

A: This is what we mean by “fitrah”.

A safe way is to teach children, whether male or female, from an early age to follow their respective fitrah.

If we allow this budaya practice (of pengkid) to continue to develop, it will become a tradition, and then a

norm. When it becomes a norm, then people will think no longer think of it as a wrong. This is something we do not want to happen.

That's why we want to go back to the fitrah. If you follow your fitrah, the chances of you being safe is higher, compared with if we were to completely give freedom until you could not differentiate between feminine characteristics and male characteristics.

Q: Unlike in other Muslim countries where a fatwa is an advisory, in Malaysia it is law. Do you really want to make this fatwa law?

A: In Malaysia, not all fatwa becomes law. It only becomes law when it is gazetted. And not all fatwas in Malaysia are gazetted.

Q: So, this fatwa hasn't been gazetted?

A: This is only at the national muzakarah stage. Most fatwas are not gazetted.

Usually, we look at what the subject is. If it is a fatwa that involves aqidah (Islamic doctrine), it is gazetted. This is because it requires follow-up action by the authorities, especially with deviationist teachings, or extremist or militant movements, as these involve issues of security and will need legal action.

But not all fatwas are gazetted. In fact, not all fatwas have to be gazetted.

Q: But in this case?

A: The gazetting of this fatwa is up to the discretion of the State. We prefer to look at it as an issue of social ill that we can overcome through dakwah (propagation of Islam through words and action) and education.

There are already provisions in the law for cases that have gone to the point of sexual crimes – such as being an active lesbian.

This decision was only just recently made. The process of making a fatwa is quite unique. The national fatwa council is a council that is appointed by the Council of Rulers. It's members are the muftis of all States and five experts who are recognised by Jakim and appointed by the Council of Rulers.

If it is a national issue, we will discuss it and then standardise the fatwa at the national level. But for it to be an official fatwa depends on the religious authorities in the respective states.

Q: So, are there any states that want to gazette this fatwa?

A: You'll have to ask the respective state religious authorities.

But in our opinion, this is a social ill, whereby there are many other ways in which to address it (other than legal). Like using wisdom and harmony.

Q: Is there any proof that if a woman dresses as a man, she will become a lesbian? What is the link between clothes and lesbianism?

A: Perhaps this is something that is different between the Islamic perspective and non-Islamic perspective.

Our approach is based on a rule of the maxim in Islamic jurisprudence – that we prevent the opportunity for some thing bad to happen. We believe this is a good approach in preventing something bad which is

forseeable, based on research and other issues.

This principle is used when determining a fatwa.

Back to the issue of clothes. We have said from the beginning that dressing is not the sole factor (in lesbianism). It is more about behaviour. Don't forget, a pengkid might be very feminine, but she is a pengkid because of her behaviour and sexual desires.

Q: So, a pengkid has a sexual connotation?

A: Yes. This is what we are worried about. What is meant by pengkid is a person who is inclined to be attracted to someone of the same sex.

It starts with the clothes and the behaviour.

What we are most worried about is that this person might go to the extreme level. That is why we feel it is safer for each person to strive to follow or abide by his or her fitrah.

A woman would be more damai (at peace) if she had a man as a companion.

Q: At the same time, we can't go out with a man who is not our muhrim, right?

A: True. But that (relationship) can be legalised through marriage. That is a different issue.

Women can be friends with women, and men can be friends with men. That is encouraged.

That's why in the hadith: Two people (of the same sex) that love each other, meet and part only because of Allah.

What this means is, these two people are true friends whose friendship is guided through morals.

There is nothing that says women cannot love and respect each other. This is allowed in religion. What is forbidden is the extreme act. They don't approach each other as a woman friend, but as a male companion. This is the problem.

Q: The problem is, when it comes to the level of society, the understanding of this fatwa might be different. For instance, at the moment, a lot of men's clothes have become unisex for women. So, for instance, on the days where I am going to a particularly rough place, I might wear a shirt and pants, and I might not wear earrings or bright lipstick. If someone sees me at that time, what would be the conclusion that person might have on my sexual preference?

A: That is a different issue. We are currently talking about normal conditions. If we talk about situations like you mentioned, then that's the same as a male policeman going undercover as a woman.

Q: The niat (intention) of the fatwa is one thing, but its application is another. What is going to happen if someone who has heard of this fatwa starts harrassing a woman whom he feels is dressed or behaving like a man?

A: Let's forget about the possibility of harassment by men.

Q: We can't.

A: Alright. But what if the woman who behaves like a man attracts the attention of other women. Doesn't

that also present a threat of harassment?

Q: If that's the rationale, then I'm better off dressed as a man. For, if I were to dress as a man, I would be harassed by fewer women than I would be by men, were I to be dressed as a woman.

A: (laughs) Actually, the danger to you would then be that you would be harassed by men, and there would be a new harasser (women).

But a pengkid is not just about dressing. Dressing is just one of the factors. A woman might have a husband, wears a baju kurung and tudung. But if her behaviour and desire is towards other women, this is where the woman starts to neglect her husband or even leaves him for her woman companion.

Q: And if the woman leaves her husband for another man?

A: That is another issue.

What we are discussing right now is the destruction of the family institution, which would affect the children.

And, it might even come to a point sometime in the future, where it could affect the grandchildren. Because these days, as Joan Collins says, even grandmothers are well turned out.

Q: Surely grandmothers are allowed to dress up.

A: Yes, but think of the effects on the grandchildren (if the grandmother is a lesbian). This threat is not impossible. It might happen to young grandmothers, who might have an interest in other women.

So, don't think that pengkids are just a danger to maidens. It is also a threat to (married) women. Whether she is a maiden, a married woman, or even a grandmother, she can be exposed to this problem.

Dressing is just one factor.

Q: What is in our hearts is not visible, whereas clothes is something people can see, and that is the thing upon which people can take action. What we are afraid of is the harassment and victimisation of women, whom you say you are trying to save. Your fatwa can have negative repercussions.

A: What would happen if we didn't give any advice or reminders to save our people? If we allow this problem to continue and expand, our eastern culture will be no different from the western culture. Where would our religious values go?

We consider the fatwa as an advice to parents. Parents love their children. So, this opinion (fatwa) is to save the next generation. At the same time, we have to remember that a fatwa also saves culture.

Q: I want to look at the application. What is are the characteristics or traits or elements that are considered feminine? What is the dresscode for women?

A: The dresscode for Muslim women is based on ensuring her safety, honour and femininity. So, the issue of the shape of dress, colour and so on is not an important issue.

In Islam, the important keyword is aurat (parts of the body which must be covered). In the context of a woman, she must not only be fully covered (except for the face and hands), but her clothes must not show the shape of her body.

For instance, people always say Muslim women cannot wear jeans. But who says they can't? In reality, Muslim women can wear jeans in public, but it has to be complemented by other things so that the shape of her body will not be revealed.

But when she goes into her own house with her family members, the jeans doesn't become a problem.

Q: The problem with the possible interpretations of this fatwa is that it may go back to the days when women were oppressed. It might even, to an extreme degree, lead people to say that women should not be engineers.

A: Does Islam forbid women from being engineers?

Q: No, it doesn't. But what is the practice?

A: A practice may be a tradition, not religious teaching. We are talking about religious teaching.

We are in Malaysia, not Bangladesh where they mix-up their cultural practices with their religious practices.

Over here, we are talking about what is taught by religion.

Q: That is because you are a thinking person. You cannot assume that everyone in society is going to think like that.

A: That's why we issued the fatwa with an explanation, so that people would understand that this is a religious requirement. It is not a restriction that has nothing to do with religion.

Also, don't forget that religion is actually very flexible. A lot of traditional practices can be accepted into religious practice. The principle of Islamic jurisprudence is that an adat tradition) can be accepted as hukum (decision). But that depends on what kind of adat. Certainly, not an adat that oppresses women, for that is not in keeping with the demands of religion. It is Islam that freed women.

Q: But, unless they studied the history of Islam, not a lot of people realise how much Islam liberated women. Especially now, if an outsider looks at Islam, it seems as if Islam oppresses women. This is because of what is practised, which may not be the same as Islam teaches.

A: I think a lot of people think a dresscode is restrictive. If you wear certain clothes, does it mean you cannot be a careerwoman, a professional who is successful in her field? No. This proves that religion does not oppress women. What restricts you is not your clothes.

People use the Islamic dresscode as an excuse to say that Islam oppresses women.

Q: Be realistic. Malay culture is very patriarchal and very male-oriented. A fatwa that starts out with good intentions could be deviated and used as a tool for something else. For instance, if you were the creator of something as potent as nuclear energy, surely you would want to think of a way to ensure that it is not used for the would want to think it is not used for the wrong reasons. If a state gazettes this fatwa, how is it going to be enforced? For instance, not every Muslim woman wears a tudung. So, in order to enforce the fatwa, you have to first verify that a woman is a Muslim. Does that mean that an enforcement officer will stop the woman, ask to see her identification card (IC), look to see whether she is Muslim, and then if yes, proceed to look her up and down to assess her dressing? Most

enforcement officers are men – so, isn't this going to be a problem?

A: That is deviating the issue from the real issue. The real issue we are concerned about is when a married woman is attracted to a woman. Or when a young girl who is growing up and her social process is not in keeping with her fitrah. In the long run, this won't be good for her. Men need women, and women need men. This is what we are trying to protect.

If we did not remind people that this is a deviant trend, are we willing to see how the next generation is going to look like?

This fatwa is intended to bring about good. Even though it is advice and guidance for Muslims, it is actually suited to the universal values of other religions.

Does Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Taoism, or Buddhism allow lesbianism?

Q: Do you consider homosexuality to be a 'contagious disease'?

A: If we look at Eastern Europe and some states in the United States, there is a move to legalise these things there, from pressure groups or international organisations. But this is a social movement. We are looking at the issue from a religious perspective.

NGOs in Malaysia's who held demonstrations protesting this fatwa were largely non-Muslim – the people behind the demonstrations. That's why I want to ask: In their religions, is lesbianism allowed?

Q: Maybe you are mistaken in thinking that they are objecting to your stand against homosexuality. Perhaps they are objecting to your restricting women's rights to choose their own clothes.

A: If that is true, then that means they don't understand the real issue.

The issue of pengkid is not just clothes. We have stated clearly that among the characteristics of a pengkid is the dressing. What we are discussing now is pengkid.

Q: Let's look at khalwat (close proximity) raids. When enforcement officers suspect khalwat is taking place, they knock on the door in the middle of the night. The occupants of the residential unit, who are not up to any mischief, are sleeping. They are all chaste girls and there are no men hiding in the unit. But the enforcement officers barge in and start taking photos of these girls in their sleepclothes. These sleepclothes are not of the same standard of decency that a woman would wear if she were receiving guests in the daytime. But these enforcement officers take their photos in this state of undress. Isn't this an offence? Whereas, the initial intention of the rule is different. But because the rule is there, it can be misused by an enforcement officer who has different objectives. This is the concern.

A: I think we've gone into a different topic. I don't think we're talking about pengkid anymore.

Q: This is about the repercussions of a fatwa. The niat might be good, but the application might be wrong. If we are realistic, we will admit that not all things that start with good intentions will end in goodness.

A: But we have to differentiate between principle and enforcement.

The principle of a certain law has to exist. It doesn't mean that just because we are worried the enforcement will be wrongly applied, we don't establish any laws.

For instance, we have the Penal Code. But there are people who misuse the Penal Code. We know that the police have been known to do this.

Q: But the police have their Standard Operating Procedures.

A: The Jabatan Agama (religious department) also has an SOP, but not a lot of people know that.

Just because one or two people masquerade as police, or there are some unethical policemen and do not observe legal procedures, does this mean we shouldn't have these laws? What would happen to society?

We are talking about principles. We have to be clear on what is right and what is wrong. We have to do this either through codifying laws, or through a fatwa that gives guidance.

Q: Is it not possible, when issuing a fatwa like this, to add a proviso that says that the people who can guide or advise these women are only the parents and husband, and everyone else cannot disturb these women? Because if you really want to guide these women, then at least it would limit it to the people who are really involved in these women's lives, rather than strangers who would just harrass.

A: That would not be practical or realistic at all. And it runs counter to the spirit of dakwah.

It is true that the parents, immediate family, and husband or wife have a right and responsibility to advise and protect their family members. A husband has the responsibility to protect his family. A wife has the right to advise her husband and family. But this does not mean that other people in society do not have the right in religion to correct a certain situation. In other contexts, we have such a thing as social responsibility. We cannot say, in the instance of hooliganism, that only the parents or elder siblings should admonish the child.

When it is something that can bring about ill, the person closest to the offender has a greater right and responsibility to take reparative action, but other people also have a role to play. That is the difference between seeing things from the perspective of dakwah and the western perspective of human rights.

Q: As we have seen from history, everytime society says it wants to protect women, in the end, it is the women who become victims.

A: I would like to challenge international research agencies to do a study on where women are safest. Actually, it is women who live in a community that practises Islam that are safest. Because they are protected.

We can prove this with research. And don't take isolated cases. Isolated cases exist everywhere.

Q: As a journalist, I go to all sorts of places in Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia. And, 99.99 per cent of the people who harass me are Malay men.

A: That's why I said, "people who practise Islam". Islam meaning protecting women. Those who harassed you were Malay men, but not Muslims who practise the teachings of Islam. We are talking about the teachings of Islam, not Malay culture.

Q: But laws are not for the good people, they are for the bad people. Good people, even if there are no laws, would still be good people.

A: If we had no laws, a social system that could guide and advise us, or religious teachings or fatwas, do you think this world would be peaceful?

Q: Yes.

A: What I mean is, our lives would be more secure and harmonious if there were laws and a social system that protected us. In the context of Islam, laws are Shariah (a way of life).

Q: If this fatwa is to stop homosexuality...

A: Lesbians. It's to stop lesbianism.

Q: Why didn't you come out with a fatwa reminding everyone that homosexuality – male or female – is wrong, and homosexuals should be advised about this. Why did you focus only on lesbians?

A: Everyone understands homosexuality and lesbianism. In the context of religion, this is a deviant practice.

But we are focusing on pengkids right now because it is a new trend that some people in society feel is not wrong. They see it as only a trend. If you only look at clothes, it might be seen as only a fashion trend.

This is what worries us.

As far as lesbianism, homosexuality and zina (illicit sex) are concerned, there's no need for a fatwa, because the rules are already clear on this. I think everyone already understands this. And all the provisions exist in law.

A fatwa focuses on new things where society is uncertain of its rightness or wrongness.

As a result of Jakim's study, we concluded that this is a trend that our society seems unclear on, and even Muslims think it's a normal thing. And this is something we are concerned about, because it can influence our children.

Q: You don't think it's a problem when, instead of casting your gaze downwards (from looking at people from the opposite sex), you are looking at the way a woman is dressed and assessing whether her clothes are too tight or too manly?

A: Actually, we don't have to stare; it's possible to see with just one glance. (laughs) Staring at a woman is a separate sin.

Q: Isn't it that in Islam what is important is what is inside – your substance – instead of what you are wearing? Your niat is the most important, isn't it?

A: That's incorrect. Your interpretation is wrong.

Yes, it's true that there is a hadith which says that our actions are judged based on our niat, and there is another hadith that says that Allah looks at our hearts. That's because iman (faith) rests in the heart; and the Allah's acceptance of our actions is based on our niat. That is the way Allah judges us.

But, in life, we are also bound to the principle that humans judge based on what humans can see. What is hidden can only be judged by Allah.

For instance, even if I cover all my aurat perfectly, like today when I am wearing the baju Melayu, but if I have an evil heart, even though I am dressed like a true Malay, or true Arab, or true Indian, I would still be a sinner because of my evil heart. That is one way Allah judges you, according to what is in your heart.

But Allah also judges you on your actions. In this context, there are things that are forbidden and things that are encouraged.

In dressing, for instance, the question of intention is one thing.

If I were to dress in such a way that exposed my aurat, even though my intentions are good, it is still an offence. The same as if I am properly dressed but have bad intentions. I have still done wrong.

You are judged on what is in your heart and how you translate that intention in your actions.

Q: Is it possible that there is a misunderstanding that a woman who dresses as a man will become a lesbian?

A: It looks as if we are only discussing clothes today.

Q: This is the thing that has created uproar in the month since the fatwa was announced.

A: But in the fatwa council's discussion about pengkid, we spent less than five minutes talking about dressing.

If you look at our explanation on the issue, you'll see that "pakaian" (clothing) is only mentioned a couple of times.

Q: But that paper is not issued to everyone. That is why this misunderstanding could have occurred. I myself looked all over the Jakim website for it.

A: We haven't had a chance yet to explain the fatwa.

Q: But it's been a month since the fatwa was announced.

A: When we announced the fatwa, we did try and explain it, but during the question and answer session with the Press, what they focused on was the issue of dress. Society has been misled by the media that is biased and prejudiced. This is not fair to the fatwa council.

Q: In one month, there has been no clear explanation of the fatwa. And so, it is not surprising if people are angry, because they do not understand the fatwa. And one month of no explanation is inexcusable.

A: Why is the media only just meeting us after one month? That has to be answered.

Q: I have been trying to see national fatwa council chair man Prof Datuk Shukor Husin for a while now.

A: Well, unfortunately, he's been rather busy, visiting three countries and only just came back (two weeks ago).

But to completely put the blame on the media would not be right either.

We make only the decision of the fatwa available to the public. But for researchers or academics, they can come for the detailed explanation and get it at any time. In fact, there are so many of these people, that we can sometimes barely attend to them. But even so, we are always very glad when people come to study the fatwas and ask how they are decided.

Q: How is a fatwa decided?

A: At Jakim, the process is based on studies. We prepare a research paper. If the issue concerns Shariah, we bring it to the panel that studies shariah issues, which consists of muftis and academics who are not Jakim staff and who are free to voice their opinions. We also have women.

Q: When deciding on this fatwa, were there any women involved?

A: After undergoing that process, we then bring the matter to the national fatwa council committee. We also have women in this committee, but not many people know this.

But the issue is not whether the fatwa was brought out by men or women. What is important is that research is done in a comprehensive manner. If a person is an expert, we invite that person to contribute.

Q: If a matter involves women, women should at least be consulted. Because Puan Najibah (the Jakim public relations officer) and I, for instance, both know that even if we were to dress up as men, we wouldn't be attracted to women. If I were to dress you up in a baju kurung, do you think you might be attracted to Ustaz Zakaria (his special officer)?

A: (laughs) Oh dear, this is starting to feel like a court room.

Don't forget, even though we might not be attracted to people from the same sex, they might be attracted to us.

Q: Well then, you shouldn't dress like a man, otherwise I might be attracted to you...

A: Well, that would be in keeping with our fitrah. If women liked men, and men liked women, that is fitrah, and it can be legalised through the institution of marriage.

Q: What would happen if you dressed as a man, and a gay man was attracted to you?

A: That would be a different sort of crime.

That's why I keep repeating, it's not all about the clothes.

A man could seem extremely masculine, but in reality he is gay. What is at fault is not his clothes, but his homosexual behaviour.

Q: Surely you can see how, from a fatwa that had a good niat, in just one month it could be interpreted in so many different ways. That is the nature of mankind, to misinterpret things. And we haven't even got to the enforcement stage yet.

A: We aren't talking about enforcement yet. If the matter gets to an extreme level where, if we do nothing, the homosexual and lesbian culture becomes widespread, we might have to have enforcement. We are trying to save society.

Q: Let's say if I were to dress like my photographer just now, and I get harassed by people because of this fatwa. What is my right? I'm not talking about enforcement by law, but enforcement by society.

A: If we talk about enforcement, it's only the legal authorities, who have been given enforcement powers. People who have not been given enforcement powers are breaking the law if they try to do the enforcing. There are provisions to deal with those kinds of people.

Q: Is anyone going to be given the powers to enforce this fatwa if it is gazetted?

A: We already have religious department enforcers. In any case, at this moment, we have in the law what is called musahaqah. That is, when a woman has sexual relations with another woman.

(The penalty for this offence is a fine of not more than RM5,000 or imprisonment of not more than three years, or whipping of not more than six lashes, or a combination of any of these).

So far, there hasn't been a case yet, but surely we're not going to wait for this problem to arise before we do

anything. We hope it won't ever happen, but whatever that might lead to crime must be stopped. The same with any crime. If you study criminology, in any criminal system, if something can lead to a crime, there will be laws in place that will prevent this.

Q: But in the criminal system, a person is only penalised when he has committed the offence and is proven to have committed the offence.

A: That is another matter.

But if it is an act that may lead to a criminal act, in any criminal system, whether in the east or the west, there will be a system that will obstruct it.

For example, you need a licence to own a firearm. If you don't have a licence, you can be penalised. This is to prevent a crime from happening.

Q: Can clothes be a weapon that can lead to a crime? The reason I keep coming back to this issue is because it is part of the wording in the fatwa. And, it is actually quite possible that people will forget the initial intention of the fatwa was to curb lesbianism, and focus solely on harassing women who seem to be dressed like men.

A: I think we have become stuck in a western values trap that makes the dresscode an excuse to denigrate our religion and values.

Q: But it is not westerners who are going be the main cause of the problem. It will be easterners like us.

A: I meant in the way we think. We are thinking about fiqh and unhealthy practices, and we have fallen into this trap. We have to look at it from the right perspective. We should prioritise the implied meaning of the fatwa.

Q: If everyone we were dealing with were all good men and women, this wouldn't be a problem. The problem arises when there are people who do not think logically or rationally.

A: We will deal with that with the values and laws that already exist. If someone infringes on the rights and privacy of another person, I think we are not short on laws to deal with that.

Q: What if someone says, "Oh but the fatwa says I must advise or admonish you," but the focus of admonishment is something altogether different?

A: Does the fatwa says that all people must be involved in this? The fatwa determines the principle, as a guideline for family members, educators. If we do not create this awareness, I cannot imagine what the character of Muslims or non- Muslims will be like in the future. Will Kuala Lumpur be another Bangkok or Helsinki?

We want our own Malaysian identity. Particularly as Malaysia is a Muslim country. We are admired for our strong faith, and for the moderate approach that we practise. It is a model for the entire 56 OIC (Organisation of the Islamic Conference) member countries.

Q: Is lesbianism or homosexuality a 'contagious disease'?

A: Do we want to wait for it to be of disaster proportions before we take action?

Looking at the current reaction, it will become a disaster if we don't do something now.

Q: But if you go to western countries, it doesn't appear to be something that's 'contagious'.

A: Can you prove that it isn't?

Q: Can you prove that it is?

A: We can prove it. Because it spread to this country. That's proof that it's contagious. That's dangerous.

Q: Did it come here, or was it already here?

A: If each ethnicity practised its traditional culture, the issue of pengkid would not arise. Look at how traditional Malay women dressed, and look at how Indian and Chinese women dress. Looking at just the ethnic elements and not the religious ones, you can tell an Indian woman from an Indian man from the way they are differently dressed according to their tradition.

Just like Muslims, if we all observed the pure and clean elements of our culture, the issue of pengkid would not arise.

Q: When would you say this problem came to Malaysia?

A: It's been around quite a while. But it was imported.

Q: Is it bad because it was an import? Islam was imported in to this country, too.

A: That's true. Something is not bad just because it is an import. What matters is whether it has positive or negative values. If we import nano-technology, for instance, then that is an example of a good import. For Jakim, which is an Islamic institution, what is not a good import is anything that contradicts the teachings of Islam.

All people of any religion or culture should be worried about this problem, because it can bring about social decline. Why should it be just Islam that has to do this battle? And why are people looking askance at us, whereas we are trying to save all of society?

If people of other religions also obeyed this fatwa, I'm certain it will bring good to Hindus, Buddhists and so on.

We are talking from the perspective of religion. Is what we have outlined from the Islamic perspective not good for Malaysians who are not Muslim?

If we respect this fatwa, will it visit harm on Muslims?

I would like non-Muslims in Malaysia to understand that the teachings of Islam is for the good of all.

People should realise that if the application or enforcement of a law is flawed, it is the fault of the person who is enforcing, and not the law itself. Because otherwise, does this mean we should abolish moral law?

When people question why should there be people to decide what we can wear, they are no longer questioning the enforcement of the law anymore, but the law itself.

THE FATWA

"PENGKID, that is, women who have the appearance, mannerisms and sexual orientation similar to men is haram in Islam. We urge parents and the Muslim community to pay serious attention to this problem. Emphasis should be on teaching and guiding young girls, especially on the aspects of their clothing,

behaviour and appearance, so that this problem may be avoided because it runs counter to their fitrah* and Allah's way."

* Fitrah is the innate natural sexual inclination that each human is born with and which does not change. In Islam, if a person is born male, he is masculine and is sexually attracted to women; and if a person is born female, she is feminine and sexually attracted to men.

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