

PROGRESSIVE SALAFISM IN ONLINE FATWA

R. Rusli

State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) Palu, Indonesia

rusli_mochtar@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper deals with the construction of progressive Salafism in online fatwa, particularly in the site of Islam Online. This website is established by Yūsuf al-Qarādāwī and his colleagues within the European Council for Fatwa and Research, which has been influenced by reformist-salafists, such as al-Shawkānī, al-Afghānī, ‘Abduh, and Riḍā, who underline the role of text and modernity. The site’s approach is progressive-substantialist (combining teks and reality), which is built on the principles of Islamic law on minorities (fiqh al-aqalliyyāt), like taysīr (facilitation), wasaṭiyyah (moderation), and i’tidāl (equilibrium), that are seen as universal values contributing to the creation of a global-pluralist society. Because of its moderate nature, the language used by the site tends to emphasize not on prohibiting and labelling “heretic”, but on a solution to the problems people encounter. In relation to socio-political language, the concept of ummah is understood in an inclusive way. Ummah is built and based on the principles of belief (īmān) and Islam, and tied by the solidarity of the Quranic messages about Islamic monotheism (tawḥīd) and divine justice (‘adl). The concept of ummah refers to the Quranic concepts such as ummah wasaṭ or ummah muqtaṣidah, which means “moderate community”.

[Artikel ini membahas tentang konstruksi Salafisme progresif dalam fatwa online, terutama situs Islam Online. Website ini didorong oleh Yūsuf al-Qarādāwī dan para koleganya dalam European Council for Fatwa and Research, yang dipengaruhi oleh salafi-reformis, seperti al-Shawkānī, al-Afghānī, ‘Abduh, dan Riḍā, yang menghargai teks dan modernitas. Pendekatan situs ini adalah progresif-substansialis (menggabungkan teks dan realitas), yang dibangun pada prinsip-prinsip fikih minoritas (fiqh

al-aqalliyyāt), seperti taysīr (memberikan kemudahan), wasatīyyah (moderat), dan i'tidāl (keseimbangan), yang dilihat sebagai nilai-nilai universal yang memberikan kontribusi bagi penciptaan masyarakat global yang pluralis. Karena watak modernnya, bahasa yang digunakan oleh situs ini cenderung tidak menekankan pada pengharaman dan pelabelan “bidah”, namun menekankan pada solusi terhadap masalah-masalah yang dihadapi masyarakat. Terkait dengan bahasa sosial-politik, konsep umat dipahami dalam cara yang inklusif. Umat didasari pada prinsip iman dan Islam, dan diikat oleh solidaritas pesan Alquran tentang monoteisme Islam (tawḥīd) dan keadilan (ʿadl). Konsep umat mengarah kepada konsep Alquran seperti ummah wasaʿ atau ummah muqtaṣidah, yang berarti “komunitas yang moderat”.]

Keywords: online fatwa, progressive Salafism, *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt*.

A. Introduction

Salafi-reformist as both concept and movement owed much to the Muslim reformists like Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, which have been intellectually influenced by the ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, al-Shāṭibī, and al-Shawkānī. These scholars are known as the pioneers of Islamic reform who made a great effort to awaken the Muslim community through intellectual awakening. The project strives to build solidarity among Muslims in order to face colonial challenges. This project gradually shifts its focus to the world of ideas. The reformers recognized the dangers arising from the political and cultural hegemony, but they still want to be part of the European era rather than getting away from it. Their writings suggest that Islam can accommodate the social patterns and institutions from the West. Some of their writings tried to compare the essence of Islam (*rūḥ al-Islām*) with modern western civilization. However, unlike the Orientalists who just made the difference between the two civilizations, the reformers even tried to draw parallels between both and viewed that the essence of both traditions are the same

Intellectual influence of the Muslims reformist spread to the next Muslim scholars in the contemporary Muslim world, which indirectly encourages the establishment of the site of *Islam Online*, that plays an important role in the spread of moderate Islam through the fatwā, and also becomes a forum for a variety of Islamic discourses. One reason is to

meet the demand of many people to obtain the answers to the problems they pose via the Internet.¹ This paper will focus on the history of *Islam Online* site, its ideology and intellectual actors. In addition, this paper will analyse the construction of Salafi in the website, the concepts and specific languages the group has used.

B. Islam Online: History, Content, and Intellectual Actors

1. *The history of the Website and its Ideological Orientation*

Islam Online, launched online on June 24, 1999 in Arabic and English, has been controlled by Al-Balāgh Cultural Society, founded in 1997 on the initiative of Maryam Ḥasan al-Hajarī and Dr. Ḥāmid al-Anṣārī. However, the person who plays a vital role is Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī. The centre for the development of the website is located in Doha, while most of the site's content is produced in Cairo. The purpose of this site is “to present a comprehensive and living character of Islam, adjusting to the developments of modern times in all areas.”² In the field of Islamic law, the purpose of this site is to expand the scope of Islam and to present Islam and its methods in a comprehensive way in order that legal rules and system can complement each other, based on justice and balance in all places and times, and to present tolerant and humanist aspects of its law.³

Islam Online is one of the most influential fatwa websites,⁴ trying to unearth the Islamic law based on piety, and adapt Islamic law to contemporary conditions. This website can be understood as “Islamic project that brings peaceful resistance, intellectual reforms, gradual social transformation in globalizing world's conditions.”⁵ *Islam Online* site provides an abundant database fatwa that can be easily traced. Its *muftīs* were from the graduates of Al-Azhar to Muslim scholars who settled in Europe and North America. The figures behind this website are reformist-minded, but not deprived of early Muslim traditions. The

¹ Bettina Gräf, “Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī in Cyberspace”, *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 47, no. 3 (2007), p. 414.

² “About Us”, *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/English/AboutUs.shtml>, accessed 28 Apr 2010.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Gary R. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age e-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).

⁵ Raymond William Baker, *Islam Without Fear: Egypt and New Islamists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 111.

influences of such reformists as al-Afghānī, ‘Abduh, and Rashīd Riḍā on them cannot be so easily ignored that it is not surprising that their fatwas look more moderate than other fatwas. Due to a variety of *muftīs*, the fatwas varied in terms of judgment and reasoning.

Furthermore, *Islam Online* website adheres to the principles of *fiqh al-aqallīyyāt* (Islamic laws on minority), as an attempt to provide an Islamic basis for a relatively complex relationship between Muslim’s moral obligation and solidarity with non-Muslims. The term was invented by al-Qaraḍāwī.⁶ This idea is based on the assumption that, the status of Muslim minorities in the non-Muslim states is uncertain; significant numbers of Muslims have the awareness to give religious answers to ethical dilemmas, and the space for Muslims to live as a minority gives some flexibility.⁷

According to al-Qaraḍāwī, Islamic law can be applied to all Muslims everywhere. However, *fiqh al-aqallīyyāt* should also consider the place, time and conditions of each minority. He mentioned some of the pillars (*rakā’iḥ*) for *fiqh al-aqallīyyāt* as follows:⁸

- Performing proper contemporary *ijtihād*, which includes *ijtihād tarjīhī intiqā’ī* (selecting the view which is more powerful in scale and more precise in achieving *maqāṣid al-shar’* and establishing human welfare) and *ijtihād ibdā’ī inshā’ī* (legal reasoning of new events in the problems of life which has now reached hundreds or thousands, while the answer is not found directly in classical *fiqh* (Islamic laws));
- Observing general Islamic legal maxims (*qawā’id al-fiqh al-kullīyyah*) that are deemed as a tool for a judge to resolve the case, for a *muftī* to issue legal opinion, and for someone to solve social problems and religious laws;
- Considering the jurisprudence of reality to solve legal problems;
- Focus on collective jurisprudence based on public benefit considerations take precedence over individual welfare;
- Using the method of *taysīr* (facilitation) according to the direction of the Prophet: “Make it easy and do not make it hard. Announce good

⁶ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Fi Fiqh al-Aqallīyyāt al-Muslimah* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2001). According to Khalid Mas‘ud, this term is used in fatwa for the first time by Ṭāhā Jābir al-Alwānī in 1994; M.K. Masud, “Islamic Law and Muslim Minorities”, *ISIM Newsletter*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2002).

⁷ Cited in Andrew F. March, “Sources of Moral Obligation to non-Muslims in the ‘Jurisprudence of Muslim Minorities’ (Ficq al-aqallīyyāt) Discourse”, *Islamic law and society Islamic Law and Society*, vol. 16, no. 1 (2009), pp. 37–8.

⁸ Qaraḍāwī, *Fi Fiqh al-Aqallīyyāt al-Muslimah*, pp. 40–60.

news and do not make them run away”;⁹

- Observing the maxim “fatwa changes due to changes in causing factors”. The factor includes customs, human welfare, emergency situation (*darūrah*), corrupted social morality, changes in time and system;
- Observing the norm of graduation, which is natural law (*sunnah kawniyyah*) and religious law (*sunnah shar‘iyyah*);
- Recognizing human’s emergency situation and needs, individual or collective. Something previously forbidden can be permitted when there are emergencies.¹⁰ In fact, secondary needs (*hājīyyāt*) can occupy any position of emergencies (*darūriyyāt*) under certain conditions;¹¹
- Getting away from a strict attachment to particular school of law because it is one form of heresies.¹² The reason is that detachment from certain school of law is closer to a true understanding of God’s intent, and one way to distinguish between following the Prophet and following the others; in addition, pious generations (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) do not follow one particular school of Islamic law.

These pillars form the epistemological basis for issuing fatwas in the website of *Islam Online*, and this is confirmed by Ṣabrī¹³ that moderation must rely on the maxim *taghayyur fatwā bi taghayyur al-aẓminah wa ‘l-amkinah wa ‘l-awā‘id wa ‘l-niyyāt* (change in fatwa can occur due to changes in time, place, customs, and intentions); customary laws (*urf*); considering the consequences that may arise (*al-naẓ}ar ilā ‘l-ma’ālāt*); identifying the object to be studied (*taḥqīq al-manāt fī ‘l-ashkḥās wa ‘l-amwā*).

2. The Site’s Contents and Intellectual Actors

This website provides a variety of information about Islam, civilization, contemporary issues, and important information in the 21st

⁹ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Nīsābūrī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Riyāḍ: Bayt al-Afkār al-Dawliyyah, 1998), p. 721; Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Riyāḍ: Bayt al-Afkār al-Dawliyyah, 1998), p. 820.

¹⁰ Quran, 2:173; 5:3; 6:145; 16:115.

¹¹ In *fiqh* legal maxim reads: *al-hājāh tanẓil manẓilah al-darūrah* (primary needs can occupy any position of emergencies); Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Zarqā, *Sharḥ al-Qawā‘id al-Fiqhiyyah* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1989), pp. 209–12.

¹² Muḥammad ‘Īd al-‘Abbāsī, *Bid‘ah al-Ta‘aṣṣub al-Madhbabī* (1991), pp. 77–8.

¹³ Mas‘ūd Ṣabrī, “al-Fatwā ‘Abra al-Intirnit: Numūdḥaj Islām Ünlayn nīt”, *Islam Online* (31 May 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1180421194744&pagename=Zone-Arabic-Shariah%2FSRALayout, accessed 31 May 2010.

Figure 1: The Appearance of the Site of *Islam Online*

Arabic	English
Homepage portal: <i>al-Ra'isiyyah</i>	Homepage portal: Home
<i>Akbbār wa Taḥlīlīyyāt</i> (News and Analysis)	News
<i>Shar'ī</i> (Islamic Law, Islamic Normative)	Living Shariah
<i>Madārik</i> (Knowledge)	Health and Science
<i>Islāmiyyūn</i> (Islamists)	Politics in Depth
<i>Namā'</i> (Development)	Reading Islam
<i>Ulūm wa Ṣiḥḥah</i> (Sciences and Health)	Family
<i>Thaqāfah wa Fann</i> (Culture and Art)	Art and Culture
<i>Ḥawā wa Ādam</i> (Adam and Eve)	Youth
<i>Mashākil wa Ḥulūl</i> (Problems and Solution)	Euro-Muslims
<i>Wasā'it Muta'addidab</i> (Various Media)	IOL Radio

century. Numerous articles, legal consultation and views represent only the views of the author with different educational backgrounds. This website is an open discussion forum in two languages, English and Arabic, written separately from one to another.

The website's pages available in Arabic and English are not the same, because the contents are intended for the public different users. English pages are primarily directed to the Muslims who settled in the non-Muslim's region or non-Muslim users, while the Arabic pages are intended for Muslims living in Muslim territory. The website's structure is regularly expanded and modified. The Figure 1 shows the difference in presentation between Arabic and English pages on this website.

In relation to fatwā, one can visit "Live Fatwa" or "Fatwa Bank" which archive the fatwas issued by different clerics. Fatwa covered by this section includes several themes such as the Islamic view of the celebration of Christmas, Islam and the environment, marriage relationships, *jihād* (Islamic wars), infections and medications, parent-child and husband-wife relationships, the Palestinian crisis and world responsibilities, marital relations, Islam and sports, and the relationship of Muslims with non-Muslims, and other issues. Fatwa service includes several fields, managed by the experts or specialists in their respective fields. The construction of knowledge by experts from other scientific fields, according to al-Qaraḍāwī, is not harmful to the interpretation of

Islam. He even considers this process as *ijtihād juzʿī* (partial legal reasoning) within *ijtihād intiqāʿī* (selecting the views from classical legal traditions) or *ijtihād inshāʿī* (the interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah, which is adjusted to the conditions of a new life).

Intellectual actor behind this website includes the European Council for Fatwa and Research (EFCR), established in London in March 1997 at the initiative of two influential figures, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī dan Fayṣal Mawlawi. The organization is funded by the Al-Maktoum Foundation, and aims to provide religious guidance in matters of Islamic law to the Muslims who settled in Europe in the form of fatwā. Ideologically, EFCR aims at presenting to the Muslim world, particularly Muslim minorities in the West, a more moderate and humanist interpretation of Islam as a manifestation of God's unlimited compassion, knowledge, and wisdom. Sharia, in view of EFCR, is the more superior rules of life than civil laws and democracy. Sharia cannot be changed to adjust to human values that constantly change. On the contrary, it is an absolute value to which human's values and behavior can be adjusted. Sharia is a framework of values and human behavior.¹⁴

In practice, EFCR gathers the scholars who settled in Europe to unify their views on various issues of Islamic laws, and issues collective fatwās to solve problems of life experienced by the Muslim community who settled there, and organize their social interactions with the European community based on Islamic instructions. In addition, as a form of devotion to the Muslims, EFCR published numerous research and studies to solve the issues that have arisen in Europe, so that the Muslim minority in Europe can learn how to act and behave based on Islamic sharia. Fatwas issued by this institution is based on the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence in Sunni and other schools of Islamic law. Nevertheless, they are not attached to one particular school of Islamic law, but select legal opinions that are relevant to the needs of Muslim minorities in Europe. Therefore, it can be said that the scholars in this EFCR are categorized into *mutakhabayir* scholars who are not conservatively attached to particular school of law. This attitude will be reflected in their fatwas.

The second actor is Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī whose mission is to promote the idea *wasatīyyah* (balance) and *iʿtidāl* (moderation). *Wasatīyyah* is an ideological term supported and discovered by al-Qaraḍāwī since the 1970s, which refers to the importance of maintaining a balance between

¹⁴ Ahmed Akgunduz, *Introduction to Islamic Law: Islamic Law in Theory and Practice* (Rotterdam: IUR Press, 2010), p. 358.

the old and new Islamic legal doctrines, and also between different schools of law (including Shī'ah), based on the concept of *ummatan wasaṭan* (moderate community).¹⁵ This principle asserts that Islam is a method that emphasizes a balance in all aspects—belief, worship, ethics, social and legal relations. From this principle, Islam emphasizes a necessity to avoid extreme and radical attitude (*al-taṭarruf*) that is counter-productive for Islam and the Muslims. This method is called *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* (straight path),¹⁶ which is different from the methods of worship and thought from other religious beliefs and philosophies. In addition, *wasatīyyah* is one of the common characteristics of Islam.¹⁷

I'tidāl (moderation), which is one of the characteristics inherent in Islam, is the opposite of extremism (*taṭarruf*)—radical and secular in religiosity and thinking. It is called “balanced” because it maintains a balance between two different poles so that they do not replace each other. Poles include humanity and divinity, spirituality and materialism, worldly life and the afterlife, revelation and reason, past and future, individuality and collectivity, constancy and change, realism and idealism. *I'tidāl* implies that each of these aspects should be paid an equal attention without exaggeration or reduction.¹⁸

In addition to these basic principles, al-Qaraḍāwī also stressed the importance of reform and adjustment of Islam to the modern world. However, it must be based on classical Islamic laws (*fiqh*) on which contemporary jurists establish a legal framework by using their logic, spirit, direction, and interpretation to deal with the problems of today, while considering the change of time, place, and human condition.¹⁹ These religious messages based on the notion of *wasatīyyah* and *i'tidāl* have been disseminated through the Internet. Al-Qaraḍāwī realized the importance of the Internet use as an effective and efficient way to spread the message of Islam due to its low cost and wide reach. This is proven by the formation www.qaradawi.net site.

Considering his ideological orientation, al-Qaraḍāwī was

¹⁵ Quran, 2:143.

¹⁶ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-Ṣaḥwah al-Islāmiyyah Bayn al-Ikhtilāf al-Masbrū' wa'l-Taḥarruq al-Madhmūm* (Cairo: Dār al-Ṣaḥwah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī, 1992), p. 95.

¹⁷ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-Ṣaḥwah al-Islāmiyyah Bayn al-Jumūd wa'l-Taṭarruf* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2001), pp. 23–4.

¹⁸ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Introduction to Islam* (Egypt: Islamic Inc., 1995), p. 148.

¹⁹ Ana Belén Soage, “Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi: Portrait of A Leading Islamic Cleric”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2008), p. 54.

categorized by Hutch into “opportunist” tradition manager,²⁰ who tried to adjust religion to contemporary modern conditions to ensure the existence and continuity of his life. Bernard called him “tradisionalist-reformist”,²¹ a label which is denied by al-Qaraḍāwī himself because there is a contradiction within both terms. In fact, al-Qaraḍāwī claim to inherit the reformist tradition of Ibn Taymiyyah, ‘Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā, and Ḥasan al-Bannā.²² These figures are considered to influence the spirit of al-Qaraḍāwī in performing Islamic legal reasoning.

Methodologically, al-Qaraḍāwī’s legal reasoning relied on the principle of *wasatīyyah* and *i’tidāl* explained consistently in his fatwās. Given the context of this present life is so complex, *taysīr* becomes the basic principle juxtaposed with the principles of *wasatīyyah* and *i’tidāl*.²³ From the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence, the importance of this principle is based on several reasons. The first reason is related to the assumption that the basis for sharia is easiness, difficulty removal, concession, mercy, tolerance, as elucidated in the Quran²⁴ and Sunnah of the Prophet. Secondly, Muslims in this contemporary era need something more facilitating, due to the weakening of their spirit in doing good and the increasing desire to do evil, accompanied with many obstacles that hinder them from doing good. This occurred especially after the Islamic societies were mixed with non-Muslims and affected by different thoughts and customs. Therefore, in issuing fatwās, the Muslim jurists should pay attention to the concept of *rukhsah* (facilitating).

In addition, in issuing fatwās, al-Qaraḍāwī starts from the classical *fiqh* tradition, but not rigidly attached. He selected from various legal opinions through to process of adjustment to contemporary conditions. Therefore, social sciences, such as sociology, economics, politics, international relations, and other sciences, is necessary to grasp,²⁵ because they can reveal the factual nature of the case which is to be given its fatwā. Thus, the accuracy of fatwa can reach a high point. From this fact, al-

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²¹ Cheryl Bernard, *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources and Strategies* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2003), http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/2005/MR1716.pdf.

²² Soage, “Sheikh Yūsuf al-Qaradawī”, p. 56.

²³ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Khiṭābunā al-Islāmī fī ‘Aṣr al-‘Avlamah* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2004), pp. 141–7.

²⁴ Quran, 2:178, 185; 5:6; 4:27.

²⁵ Taha Jabir al-Alwani, *Towards a Fiqh for Minorities: Some Basic Reflections* (London; Washington: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2003), p. 3.

Qaraḍāwī's method of fatwās is a combination of reading the traditions (*turāth*) and reality (*wāqi'*). For this purpose, al-Qaraḍāwī²⁶ elucidated some important steps before a muftī issues fatwa:

- Getting Away from Fanaticism to a Particular school of law and blind imitation (*al-taḥarrur min 'l-ʿaṣabiyyah al-madhbabiyyah wa't-taqlīd*);
- The spirit of granting easiness (*taysīr*) and concession (*rukḥṣah*) is more dominant than giving hardship. This is based on the fact that sharia is theoretically and historically established on this spirit;
- Dialogue with the community of his time with the language that can be understood, as well as avoiding the use of difficult terms and words, with the aim of realizing the ease and accuracy. In this regard, according to al-Qaraḍāwī, there are several things that must be considered by a mufti: first, in dialogue, he must rely on logic, not feelings; secondly, to renounce the use of uncommon and in-depth words; thirdly, deciding the law which is accompanied with legal wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and *ratio legis* ('*illab*);
- Avoiding questions that are not useful and invisible problems which are no provisions in the religious texts;
- Staying in a middle position between the liberal (*mutaḥallil*) and narrow-minded conservative groups (*mutaḥammil*);
- Explaining the fatwa issued, accompanied with arguments, legal wisdoms (*ḥikmah*) and *ratio legis* ('*illab*), as well as comparative analysis between Islamic views on one particular case and other views.²⁷

These six pillars become an axis of fatwā in the site of *Islam Online*, which is a combination between textuality and contextuality. This means that the text --either writing or utterance-- makes sense to its reader if, and only if, it has a contextual effect in a context to which the reader has access. Contextual effect is achieved if a new item of information is relevant if it improves the cognitive environment of its recipients, and the more contextual effects an utterance has the more relevant it is. Those types of contextual effects are called 'contextual implications'.²⁸

²⁶ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-Fatwā Bayn al-Indibāṭ wa al-Tasayyub* (Cairo: Dār al-Ṣaḥwah, 1988), pp. 107–42.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 131–132.

²⁸ Salwa M.S. El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Quran: Relevance, Coherence and Structure* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 29.

C. The Construction of Progressive Salafism in *Islam Online*

1. *Themes of Fatwa*

The emergence of fatwa in the site of *Islam Online* can be viewed in the context of rapid change, stimulating the need to look again the traditional doctrines about the nature of moral relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. The first context includes the emergence of the discourse on global ethics about universality and equality in citizenship, human rights and religious freedom, which are attached to legal systems transplanted from Europe to countries in the Middle East. This discourse cannot influence conservative Muslims' mind, imagination and view. The second context is global change in the form of Muslim large-scale migration to the West. This encourages Muslims to introspect their religiosity. The West maintains not only non-Islamic values and cultures, but also cultural and political systems that demand Muslim's consciousness such as equality, religious tolerance, universal citizenship, civic education, gender equality, etc.

This adds a new dimension to Islam to understand the liberal citizenship. Muslims are demanded not only to know the local political systems and rules, but also to obey them. This is the context for the construction of fatwā in the website of *Islam Online*. This context plays an important role in formulating the pillars of giving fatwā, as previously explained. In this context, various fatwas about faith, politics, Muslim relationships to non-Muslims, gender and family issues, are constructed. The following discussion will analyze how Salafist construction occurs around these issues.

On Islamic Theology (*‘Aqāḍab Islāmiyyah*)

Unlike Salafi-Wahhābī's view, Salafi-reformists promote the concept of Islamic monotheism which is more humanist as confirmed by ‘Abduh who supported “the belief in humans as part of a great faith in God, based on the assumption that human values are generally formulated by worldly experiences.”²⁹ God gives men the reason as a complement to understand the will of God. Therefore, reason in the hierarchy of the sources of Islamic law occupies an important position in the process of legal reasoning, by which the context of social, political, economic,

²⁹ Samira Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition Reform, Rationality, and Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 68.

which covers a legal case, can discerned.

A close relationship between revelation and reason is clearly seen when the site of *Islam Online* provides the answers including contemporary issues, such as the environment, science, and the Muslim minority, which requires cross-disciplinary approaches from different perspectives.

On Islamic Wars (Jihād) and Suicide Attacks

Jihad is intended to protect a person's faith and human rights. It is not always interpreted as war, although it can take the form of war. War is allowed only when the peaceful media such as dialogue, negotiations, and agreements, fail to use. Islam does not teaches to use violence to make changes and reforms, as seen in the history of the Prophet. In fact, the Prophet ordered muslims to use the peaceful media without violence.³⁰ In warfare, as confirmed in this website, Islam teaches ethics of war, such as the rule that anything prohibited at the time of peace is also prohibited during the state of war; war is directed only to the military war, not civilians; the Prophet messages to fight in the way of Allah those who reject Allah, not to hurt people, not to betray, not to mutilate, and not to kill the children and those who are worshipping in the monastery, and to be kind to prisoners.³¹

Since Islam emphasizes peace and prohibits all forms of violence and suicide attacks are decreed as "unlawful". In his fatwa, Aḥmad Kuttī said:

As Muslims, we are not allowed to fight for our sake without the reasons and methods which are completely ethical and pure, and supported by God. As Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ, a famous Sufi, said, "In order for an action to be correct, it must meet two absolute requirements: First, it must be done with a sincere intention to serve Allah, secondly, it must be supported by God's law. "Since suicide can never be considered Islamic, then we can not call those who do it as a martyr."³²

³⁰ Muzammil Ṣiddīqī, "Jihad: Its True Meaning and Purposes", *Islam Online* (3 Jun 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503544490, accessed 3 Jun 2010.

³¹ IOL Shari'ah Researchers, "War Ethics in Islam", *Islam Online* (3 Jun 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503545840, accessed 3 Jun 2010.

³² Aḥmad Kuttī, "Suicide=Martyrdom?", *Islam Online* (3 Jun 2010), "Suicide=Martyrdom?" in http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1213871347148, accessed 3 Jun 2010.

However, there are exceptions, if the case is in the Palestinian territories, suicide attacks against the enemy are not forbidden, because this is not categorized as “suicide”, but is a part of the strategy of jihad in the form of martyr operations (*‘amaliyyah al-istishbād*). This action is a sacred obligation in the form of self-defense and resistance to Zionist’s injustice and oppression against Palestinian Muslims.³³ However, the attack must be directed to the Israeli military, not civilians. But the facts confirmed that they invade and disrupt the lives of all Palestinians, regardless of the baby and the parents, such as mass killings in Qana, Hebron, and Dir Yaseen. Therefore, according to Mawlawī,³⁴ there is no choice for Muslims except to kill every Israeli until they stop the massacre. The struggle will not cease unless they leave the Palestinian territories and restore al-Masjid al-Aqṣā.

The concept of *jihād* (holy war) formulated in this site is defensive jihad. This departs from historical fact that jihad that was performed by the Prophet Muhammad was self-defense. This can be seen clearly in the Battle of Badr (624 AD) and Uḥud (625 M), and also in other wars such as Aḥzāb (626 M), Qurayz}ah (627 M), al-Muṭalliq (627 M), Khaybar (628 M), Tabūk (630 M), Mu‘ṭāh (629 M), dan Ḥunayn (630 M).³⁵ The battles of Badr, Uḥud, and Ḥunayn are mentioned in the Quran.³⁶

On Muslim’s Relation to non-Muslims

There is a difference between social relationships and faith issues. In terms of faith and worship, relationships are built not as flexible as in social interaction. This can be seen, for example, in religious rituals where Muslims are warned to be cautious. Ṣiddīqī dan Kuttī asserted the prohibition of celebrating Christmas together and other religious days in their fatwa as follows.

Muslims have their own identity. In order to keep this identity, Muslim scholars said that Muslims must not celebrate Christmas or

³³ Fayṣal Mawlawī, “Martyr Operations Carried Out by the Palestinians”, *Islam Online* (3 Jun 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503543974, accessed 3 Jun 2010.

³⁴ Fayṣal Mawlawī, “Attacking Civilians in Martyr Operations”, *Islam Online* (3 Jun 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1119503544354, accessed 3 Jun 2010.

³⁵ M. Cherif Bassiouni, “Evolving Approaches to Jihad from Self-Defense to Revolutionary and Regime-Change Political Violence”, *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2007), p. 129.

³⁶ Quran, 3:122, 137, 141; 4:88; 33:23; 95:26; 110:1-3.

holidays of non-Muslims. By participation in Christmas, it is possible that slowly one may lose his or her consciousness of this basic point of difference between Islam and Christianity. Muslims must be very careful in this matter. The greatest danger is for our next generation, who may slowly lose their Islamic faith *intambid* and may start believing in Jesus as “more than a prophet and servant of Allah.”³⁷

The legal method used by Şiddīqī dan Kuttī in this issue is *sadd al-dhārī‘ah*. This principle emphasizes the anticipation of undesirable things that may occur. Therefore, the door leading to this case should be closed before it happens. Maintaining the issues of faith and identity is a goal of sharia. Then, all media that may reinforce need to be opened as wide as possible. Conversely, any potentially harmful media needs to be absolutely closed.³⁸

In social issues, relations with non-Muslims are opened as wide as possible. This means that Muslims can cooperate in economic, educational, social fields. Nevertheless, it must stand on the principle of goodness, justice, religious tolerance and mutual respect for their respective religious rituals.

On Gender and Family Relations

Relationship between husband and wife is based on kindness (*ma‘rūf*) and affection. In this relation, the position of husband and wife in the household is not hierarchical, but functional, in the sense that each has the same rights and obligations to maintain the honor and integrity of the household. Benefit is a common goal in a marriage contract. Therefore, any thing that may marginalize this benefit should be eliminated. In this context, interfaith marriage is not justified.³⁹ Similarly, for the benefit purposes, marriage records for Muslims in the non-Muslim countries are even encouraged, because the legality of a marriage in these countries,

³⁷ Muzammil Şiddīqī and Aḥmad Kuttī, “Can Muslims Celebrate Christmas?”, *Islam Online* (5 Jun 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/Fatwa E/FatwaE&cid=1119503543368, accessed 5 Jun 2010.

³⁸ European Council for Fatwa and Research, “Congratulating Non-Muslims on Their Festive Occasions”, *Islam Online* (5 Jun 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/Fatwa E/FatwaE&cid=1119503546666, accessed 5 Jun 2010.

³⁹ Muzammil Şiddīqī, “Marrying a Non-Muslim Male”, *Islam Online* (5 Jun 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/Fatwa E/FatwaE&cid=1119503543072, accessed 5 Jun 2010.

like the United States and Canada, is recognized if registered in the civil registry agency.⁴⁰

On the issue of polygamy, online mufti's view is still dominated by patriarchal interpretation that polygamy is allowed and has become a Muslims' consensus.⁴¹ This kind of marriage has existed and widely practiced before Islam, in which a man can have more than one wife without any restrictions. Islam appeared to restrict polygamy to four, and this is a very big step to restrict polygamy at that time.

Construction in gender relations is influenced by tug-of-war between textuality and reality. Gender relation is a sensitive issue, especially when it comes to the issue of marriage, because it is related to the problems of identity and faith. Therefore, interfaith marriage becomes a serious problem. The religious text emphasizes the significance of the preservation of religion and progeny as an important principle that must be implemented, and confirms the prohibition of marriage with non-Muslim men for Muslim women. Instead, the text recommends a Muslim man to marry a Muslim woman. On the other hand, human right, which has become a global issue today, gives the opportunity and freedom for everyone to perform interfaith marriages. From the tug of war between the two poles in the site of *Islam Online*, it is text that wins the discourse.

On Environmental Issues

Environment is one of the issues that have attracted *Islam Online* website. Issues such as environmental pollution, nuclear, weapons of mass destruction, recycled water, waste, reforestation, becomes a discussion of fatwā. Attention to the environment cannot be separated from serious environmental damage, which in turn harms human life. Therefore, since the beginning, Islam has established the general rules of the preservation of environment through the Quran and Sunnah, because it is related to the issue of human life and other creatures.

In Islam, the relationship between humans and the environment are part of the social existence, an existence that is based on the fact that everything in the earth worships the same God. Worship is not

⁴⁰ Muzammil Siddiqi, "Significance of Registering Marriage in the West", *Islam Online* (5 Jun 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/Fatwa E/FatwaE&cid=1119503545982, accessed 5 Jun 2010.

⁴¹ Muḥammad Nūr 'Abdullāh, "Why Polygamy is Allowed in Islam", *Islam Online* (5 Jun 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/Fatwa E/FatwaE&cid=1140333531684, accessed 5 Jun 2010.

just a ritual practice, because ritual is only a symbolic manifestation to surrender to God. The real obedience is an act, which can be practiced by all creatures on Earth that share the planet with humans. More than that, people are responsible for the welfare of other citizens in this global environment. The Quran contains verses that can be referred to be a guide for the maintaining actions.

From this basic assumption, the mufti in *Islam Online* website declared a strict prohibition against the pollution of the environment, either to land, water or air. For example, Islam forbids urinating or defecating, throwing away the garbage, carcasses, industrial waste, or similar things, into the water, because it can endanger human beings, animals, and the environment.⁴² In addition, the issue of weapons of mass destruction, such as atomic, chemical and biological weapons, is strictly prohibited to use because the effects to human beings, animals and the environment are so dangerous.⁴³

D. Symbols and Special Language of the Site of Islam Online

1. *Religious Concept*

In this website, *bid'ah* (heresy) is understood as innovations in worship which is no precedent in Islam. However, not all of which are not precedent at the time of the Prophet is considered heresy. For example, in *Islam Online* website, it is mentioned that the celebration of Prophet's birthday, which was criticized by the Salafi-Wahhābī as "heretic", is permitted and not of the forbidden heresies. The fatwa reads:

It is not *bid'ah* or innovation if we express our love to the Prophet provided that the celebration does not involve any new ritual when doing so. The Prophet allowed the celebration of himself during his life, and the Muslims can express their love to the Prophet freely without any hindrance. In fact they show their love by using his *wuḍū'* (ritual ablution) water residual.

We have a precedent in the Prophet's life and his predecessors in celebrating the events related to the Prophet. Did not they celebrate the

⁴² Naṣr Farīd Wāṣil, "Islam and Environmental Pollution", *Islam Online* (5 Jun 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/Fatwa E/FatwaE&cid=1119503549616, accessed 5 Jun 2010.

⁴³ 'Alī Jum'ah, "Using Weapons of Mass Destruction", *Islam Online* (2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/Fatwa E/FatwaE&cid=1243824987282, accessed 5 Jun 2010.

arrival of the Prophet at Madinah with singing and expressions of joy? Did not they celebrate the events of *Hijrah* by making it the basis for the Islamic calendar? Did not they make the poems to praise the Prophet? The companions of the Prophet also celebrated the Prophet's legacy with respect as an expression of their love for the Prophet.⁴⁴

From this fatwā, it appears that *bid'ah* (innovation) can be divided into two categories: *bid'ah ḥasanah* (good innovation) and *bid'ah ḍalālah* (misleading innovation). However, there is a relatively different view of al-Qaraḍāwī,⁴⁵ who asserts that making difference between *bid'ah ḍalālah* and *bid'ah ḥasanah* is not *correct*, since every innovation is misleading based on the ḥadīth the Prophet. Categorizing *bid'ah* into *ḥasanah* and *ḍalālah* is on a language basis. In a religious sense, it is asserted that this categorization is not correct since, quoting al-Shāṭibī, *bid'ah* is conceived as a means of faked religiosity which is not based on the Quran, Sunnah of the Prophet, *ijmā'* (consensus), *qiyās* (analogical reasoning), *maṣlaḥah mursalah* (public benefit), as well as the arguments of the Muslim jurists (*fuqahā*).⁴⁶ If this definition of *bid'ah* is made as a basis, then to include the action into the category of *bid'ah* is not easy.

In *Islam Online* website, *bid'ah* is not used as a political tool of religion, as it is used in the school of Salafi-Wahhābī and Salafi-jihadists, to claim a deviation of a particular group, which then leads to the statement of *takfīr* to them. Therefore, in the *Islam Online* website it is hard to find the use of the stamps of *bid'ah* and *takfīr* when dealing with the different views that do not conform to their view.

Furthermore, other religious language associated with legal-moral values made as a framework to judge the acts and behavior is classified into five categories: *wājib* (mandatory), *ḥarām* (prohibited), *makrūh* (reprehensible), *sunnah* (recommended), and *mubāḥ* (permissible). But, in *Islam Online* website, the use of these moral categories is not so widely used. This indicates that the site does not hold an atomistic view in relation to fatwā. This view confirms the reformist and moderate nature of the site, which emphasize the answer more on alternative solutions

⁴⁴ Aḥmad Kuttī, "Is Celebrating Muhammad's Birthday Bid'ah?", *Islam Online* (4 Jun 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/FatwaE/FatwaE&cid=1144161655187, accessed 4 Jun 2010.

⁴⁵ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Sunnah dan Bid'ah* (14 Apr 2009), http://perisaidakwah.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=41&Itemid=28, accessed 14 Apr 2009.

⁴⁶ Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā al-Shāṭibī, *al-I'tisām*, vol. 1 (Saudi Arabia: Maktabah al-Tawḥīd), p. 43.

rather than on narrow and binding assessments.

This moderate character of this site is also characterized by the fact that the fatwa is often equipped with a variety of legal wisdoms and arguments presented to strengthen the fatwa, and also the views which are don not support one particular school, but selecting from a variety of views the one that is based on public benefit. Thus, the language used in this website is not the above five categories employed by most Muslim jurists, but social language that promote the values of peace based on religious texts and social reality.

2. *Social Concept*

In this website, the concept of *ummah* is understood inclusively. Ummah, which constitutes the heart of Islamic identity, is based on the principle of faith and Islam, and bound by solidarity based on the Quran messages about Islamic monotheism and justice of God. The concept of ummah refers to the concept in the Quran, *ummah wasaʿ* or *ummah muqtaṣidah*,⁴⁷ which means “moderate community”. Both concepts imply that moderation is inherent in good behavior which is apart from theological doctrine and religious affiliation. This view goes beyond sectarian understanding and paves the way for religious pluralism. This perspective offers a possibility to formulate universal moral ethics, which contribute significantly to the establishment of a pluralistic global society today.

In the myriad of classical Quranic exegesis books, the term *ummah wasaʿ* is defined as “just community”.⁴⁸ Similarly, in a modern Quranic exegesis books, *ummah wasaʿ* is interpreted as “chosen community” (*kebiyār*) and “just community” (*ʿudūl*).⁴⁹ The terms *ʿudūl* and *kebiyār* refer

⁴⁷ Quran, 2:143.

⁴⁸ Abū al-Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1993), p. 594; Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʾān*, vol. 2, ed. by ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Hajr, 2001), pp. 627–30; ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Hammām al-Ṣanʿānī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, trans. by Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad (Riyāḍ: Maktabah al-Rushd, 1989), pp. 60–1; Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn ibn Masʿūd al-Baghāwī, *Maʿālim al-Tanzīl*, vol. 1 (Riyāḍ: Dār Ṭaybah, H 1409), p. 158.

⁴⁹ Shihāb al-Dīn Maḥmuḍ al- Alūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī), p. 4; Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1947), p. 4; Muḥammad Tāhīr ibn ʿĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr waʾl-Tanwīr*, vol. 2 (Tunisia: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyyah, 1984), p. 18; Muḥammad Ālī al-Ṣabūnī, *Ṣafwat al-Tafsīr*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Qurʾān al-Karīm, 1981), p. 101; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Nāṣir al- Saʿdī, *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān fi Tafsīr Kalām al-Mannān*, vol. 1 (Riyāḍ:

to “the middle path between two extreme poles”. According to ‘Abduh,⁵⁰ considering Islam as “moderate community”, Muslim *ummah* are the best just community for their belief, characters and acts to avoid extreme attitudes (*al-ghulum*) in religious practices. Before the emergence of Islam, there are people who focus exclusively on religious practice—physical and mechanical—such as Jews and polytheists, and some entirely devoted themselves to asceticism and away from worldly life like Christians, Sabaeans (*al-ṣābi’ūn*) and Hindus. Islam chooses a middle path between two polar extremes by recognizing the physical and spiritual aspects of religion.

The concept of *ummah* is positioned opposite to the concept of *ahl al-kitāb*, *kāfir*, and *mushrik* (polytheist). *Ahl al-kitāb*, which means “those who have a holy book,” is a term used for people who have a religion recognized by Islam, which is believed to come from God. Among those who fall into this category are the Jews (*al-yahūd*), Christians (*al-naṣārā*), Sabaeans (*al-ṣābi’ūn*), and Zoroaster (*al-majūs*). This group of non-Muslims is treated with kindness as long as they do not attack the unity and religiosity of Muslims. Their behavior to non-Muslims may include religious tolerance, social justice, security and protection.

In Islamic countries, *ahl al-kitāb* can enjoy both protection and security in the matters of religion, culture, social institutions, politics and economy, as well as their properties. They are considered as *ahl al-dhimmah*, which should be protected and not disturbed.⁵¹ Nevertheless, they should carry out their obligations as *dhimmī*, like paying *jizyah* (tax). In the private sphere, Islam gives an authority to the non-Muslims to define their lives according to their views. Islam do not only give freedom to *ahl al-kitāb* to hold their belief, but also require them to live their life according to their legal rules. Therefore, they are allowed to build their own religious courts in accordance with the rules of Taurat or Bible laws.⁵² In the public area, making friends with a Jew or a Christian is not only permissible, but is also considered as a beneficial action. This is easily proven by the fact that Muslim men can marry Jewish or Christian women and also eat their meal.

Dār ibn al-Jawzī), p. 102.

⁵⁰ ‘Abduh and Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 2: 4–5.

⁵¹ IOL Researchers, “Scope of Amicable Dealings with Non-Muslims”, *Islam Online* (5 Jun 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/Fatwa E/FatwaE&cid=1119503544450, accessed 5 Jun 2010.

⁵² M.A. Muhibbu-Din, “Principles of Islamic Polity towards Ahl al-Kitab and Religious Minorities”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2004), p. 165.

3. *Political Concept*

Sharia in this site is interpreted in a flexible and progressive way. This is contrary to the views of conservative purists who reject all forms of progress due to minimizing the role of reason in understanding the text. In this sense, being conservative means only accepting norms which does not contradict the Quran, while being liberal or progressive means interpreting Quranic verses according to change in time and place, and people's needs and welfare. Islamic principles and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* among online muftīs in this site are intensively used, even Muslims can take advantage of modern technology.

Man-made laws are not opponent to sharia. As long as not contrary to Islamic principles and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, a legislation which is a man-made law is not categorized as “unjust, wicked, and infidels”, as stated in the Quran.⁵³ In fact, such legislation may be considered as *sadd al-dharī'ah*, one of the Islamic legal reasoning methods. This flexible view can be seen in the case of the fatwa that requires Muslims settling in non-Muslim Western countries to ask for permission and record the marriage in a registry office. Similarly, it is recommended for Muslim couples who settle in the non-Muslim territories—after fulfilling marriage requirements—to perform marriage in marriage court in order to be recognized in society.⁵⁴ It is in accordance with the principle of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and public welfare.

E. **Concluding Remarks**

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the *Islam Online* website was inspired by the values promoted by the reformists such as al-Shawkānī, al-Afghānī, ‘Abduh, dan Riḍā. Intellectually, this site is driven by actors like the European Council for Fatwa and Research, headed by Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, known as a moderate Muslim jurist, who establish the jurisprudence of minority (*fiqh al-aqallīyyāt*). Such principles as *taysīr*, *wasatīyyah*, and *i'tidāl* are universal values that can contribute to the formation of a pluralistic global society.

The site's approach in issuing fatwā is to combine text with reality. Context plays a vital role in a change of law. Therefore, the production of knowledge in fatwā should depart from reality (*fiqh al-wāqi'*). Since the

⁵³ Quran, 5:44, 45, 47.

⁵⁴ Aḥmad Kuttī, “Court Marriage in the West”, *Islam Online* (5 Jun 2010), http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar/Fatwa E/FatwaE&cid=1119503549508, accessed 5 Jun 2010.

current reality is so complex, and morality is declining, then the principle of *rukhsah* should be put on priority. Therefore, the language used in this website is not dominated by the term *bid'ah* (heresy) or *haram* (prohibited). The fatwa usually provide alternative solutions, along with a variety of arguments and legal wisdom.

Sharia in this site is interpreted in a flexible and progressive way. Here, the principle of *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* is intensively employed. In fact, in the present context, Muslims should take advantage of modern technology. In addition, because of the flexibility of sharia, man-made laws are not considered an opponent of sharia. Following them are not the same as following *tāghūt*. As long as not contrary to Islamic principles and *maqāṣid al-shari'ah*, legislation that is a man-made law, is not categorized as “unjust, wicked, and infidels.”

The construction of *ummah* is understood in an inclusive way. Ummah is based on the principle of faith and Islam, tied by solidarity to the Quran messages about Islamic monotheism and justice. *Ummah* refers to the concept of the Koran, *ummah wasaṭ* or *ummah muqtaṣidah*, which means “moderate or middle community.” In this regard, it can be said that the purpose of disseminating fatwa (transfer of knowledge) in this site is basically to convey a moderate and peaceful face of Islam.

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