

DA`WAH IN THE PRONOUNCEMENTS OF THE ABIM LEADERS (1970s – 1990s)

Oleh:

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ABSTRAK

Dakwah mempunyai pengertian yang luas. Bagi sebuah gerakan Islam seperti ABIM, dakwah ditafsirkan secara dinamik sesuai dengan perubahan kepimpinan organisasi berkenaan. Sebagai peneraju kebangkitan dakwah era 1970an, tafsiran dakwah ABIM didapati agak radikal dan kritikal dalam rangka pencapaian objektif melaksanakan Islam sebagai way of life itu. Namun, ia didapati semakin moderate sesuai dengan perubahan kepimpinannya di era Islamisasi 1980an dan 1990an. Pelbagai justifikasi dan kaedah dikemukakan bagi memberi tafsiran yang sederhana terhadap pengertian dakwah mereka sehinggalah ianya mula kembali kepada sikap yang radikal justeru pemecatan Anwar Ibrahim bekas pemimpin ulung gerakan ini pada lewat 1990an. Ringkasnya, dakwah dalam konteks tafsiran kepimpinan ABIM terdedah kepada perubahan konsep dan pendekatan sesuai dengan dinamisme dakwah yang anjal dan murunah itu.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia – ABIM) has been closely associated as a movement with *da`wah*. To the large extent, the organisation has been considered as a pioneer of Islamic *da`wah* resurgence in the era of 1970s. In order to have a clear understanding of *da`wah* in this organisation and how it has developed, this chapter will firstly describe the constitution of ABIM and explain the notion of *da`wah* as

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established by it. Secondly, it will explain how *da`wah* has been interpreted by *ABIM*'s leaders in their successive speeches and declarations. This will include prominent leaders of *ABIM* who have led the organisation since 1971. Thirdly, these two sources will be discussed and evaluated, in order to grasp the continuity and change in the understanding of *da`wah* by *ABIM*.

This article will investigate the application of the term *da`wah* in *ABIM* as it appears in the perspective of its leading officials. In doing so, the study will look at successive official speeches and declarations by its leaders since the formation of *ABIM* in 1971. This will mainly include the speeches of its prominent leaders such as Anwar Ibrahim, Siddiq Fadhil and Dr. Muhammad Nur Manutty. Their interpretation and rationalisations of *da`wah* and other related terms and their thoughts upon them will be chronologically described. Some remarks will also be made in order to draw attention to what they emphasize and mean by this term.

ANWAR IBRAHIM ON DA`WAH

The fact that *da`wah* is being considered as the most important goal and task of *ABIM* can be clearly traced since its early formative stages. Earlier than Anwar, *da`wah* was called for by its first President, Ustaz Razali Nawawi (1971-1974),¹ in his presidential speech in 1974:

*We are commanded by Allah to be active in society, to call upon society (berdakwah kepada masyarakat), to direct society, to lead society, in order to perform good, because it would bring honour to mankind, peace to society and harmony to the Muslim Ummah. Our struggle to perform da`wah (melaksanakan dakwah) for virtuous, will consume time, effort and spirit that we are ready to sacrifice.*²

According to the above speech, the term *da`wah* is used by Razali Nawawi in two different contexts. Firstly, he directly applies the term *da`wah* in the common understanding of a call to people to Islam. Instead of utilizing the Malay word *memanggil* or *menyeru* (to call or to invite), he directly applies the term *da`wah* in this context. Secondly, *da`wah* is applied as a noun in the context of the Malay language. The statement *melaksanakan dakwah* can be translated as to perform a mission. This mission which is further associated

¹ Razali Nawawi was a President of *ABIM* from 1971-1974. He used to be a Professor in the Faculty of Law, International Islamic University (IIU).

² Razali Nawawi, Presidential Speech at the 3rd. *ABIM* Annual Assembly, 1 August 1994, presented at Sekolah Dato Abdul Razak, Seremban, Negeri Sembilan.

with goodness suggests that the goal of *ABIM*'s mission or *da`wah* is goodness or *al-khayr*.

The fact that *da`wah* which aims to create good human relationships is also one of *ABIM*'s objectives is clearly indicated by its second President, Anwar Ibrahim (1974-1982), who is quoted as saying:

*ABIM's goal has been to become an Islamic movement which has a comprehensive meaning - beginning with clear belief (Aqīdah). At the same time, ABIM will strive for worship (Ibādah), to intensify the activity of mosques and concentrate on welfare and da`wah in the context of creating good relations with all mankind (Iḥsān bayn al-nās). The organisation will continue to struggle for social justice (adālah ijtima`iyah) and finally will become a responsible spokesman for the entire community of Muslims.*³

It is noted that *da`wah* which is commonly understood as the mission for good objectives also requires subtle methodology. This can be seen from the perception of Anwar Ibrahim who bases the methodology of *da`wah* on *Sūrah al-Naḥl* 16: 125 which can be translated as:

Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious, for thy Lord knoweth the best, who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance.

He argues that this verse recommends that *da`wah* or calling people to Islam should be basically performed in a very subtle and good manner. In essence, the missionary (*da`ī*) should be full of patience, forgiveness and will always show good conduct although he might be harmed due to the messages he brings.⁴ However, he reminds the Islamic missionary to wisely discern between the common people, who should be invited in a polite manner to Islam, and those, for instance orientalist and secularists, who are clearly against Islam. In other words, the missionary should also be able to recognise between those who sincerely intend to understand Islam and those who intend to abuse it.

He suggests that wisdom (*hikmah*) which can be considered as the fundamental method of *da`wah* should be based on belief (*Aqīdah* or *Imān*).

³ The speech of Anwar Ibrahim, cited in Mohammad Nor Manutty (1990), "Perception of Social Change in Contemporary Malaysia: A Critical Analysis of *ABIM*'s Role Impact Among the Perception of the Muslim Youth", Phd. Thesis, Temple University, p.100.

⁴ Anwar Ibrahim, Presidential Speech in the 4th. *ABIM* Annual Assembly, 1975.

This belief should uphold that Islam is great and no one is greater than Islam (*Islām ya`lū wa-lā yu`lā `alayh*). As a result, the missionary should stand firm in declaring the content of Islamic *da`wah* (*mawḍū` al-Da`wah*) without concealing any truth about Islam as a complete way of life even though it might provoke negative responses.⁵

Based on this imperative, Anwar justifies the radical approach of *ABIM* in *da`wah*. He argues that any interpretation of wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and goodly counsel (*maw`iẓah al-ḥasanah*) which is confined to a subtle and accommodative approach in calling people to Islam is mere escapism and a means of blaming Islamic movements which take a confrontational approach. He also disputed the interpretation that all Muslims including missionaries must absolutely obey the rulers (*Ulū al-Amr*)⁶ regardless of right or wrong. He claims that this understanding is baseless and influenced by the apologetic and moderate Western approach which attempts to divert the teaching of Islam. Anwar firmly believes that the most excellent method of *da`wah* is the approach of the Prophet Muhammad who never compromised in his mission. He draws out the historical evidence in his presidential speech in 1975 as:

The Prophet Muḥammad did not accept all the offers, presents and wealth given to him due to his non-compromising attitude. The holy task of conveying the message (risālah al-da`wah) can not be changed with honour or challenged by coercion. Choosing Islam means to go against the life style of Jāhiliyyah- a society that does not believe in Allāh, disobeys the truth, is arrogant with power, totalitarian in action and immoral. Did concerns about the tribulations and misery faced by the Prophet due to this task stop him? Inspired by his good personality, the companions were trained in the house of al-Arqam ibn Abī al-Arqam to be patient in encountering Mushrikīn in Mecca. The struggle was pursued after the migration (hijrah) to Medina and succeeded in erecting an Ummah who is firm in belief (aqīdah) and law (sharī`ah). This is the Ummah who were able to act as a magnificent human resource that finally defeated the Romans and Persians.⁷

Inspired by this theoretical framework, Anwar further suggests that the acceptance of Islam as a complete set becomes the prerequisite for the success of *da`wah* in *ABIM*. He bases this view upon the *Qur`ānic* insistence on the acceptance of Islamic teaching as a whole. Such an understanding should be practised, he stresses, although there may be harsh criticism which could

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ The argument is based on *Sūrah al-Nisā`* 4:59.

⁷ Anwar Ibrahim, Presidential Speech in the 4th. *ABIM* Annual Assembly, 1975.

label *ABIM* as an idealistic group only suited to ancient civilization or the age of camels. *ABIM* was recommended by others to consider a more pragmatic approach towards Islam. He dismisses this suggestion because in his view the success in *da`wah* is granted and determined solely by Allah and neither through pragmatic approaches nor deceptions (*tipu muslihat*) which might ignore the principles and spirit of Islam.⁸

Anwar's view is that *da`wah* is also associated with the notion of reforming society (*iṣlah*). He derives this idea from Sayyid Quṭb who classified the Muslim community into two categories; the ignorant (*Jāhiliyyah*) and those who attempt to follow Islam as a way of life. In the light of *da`wah*, he suggests that the Muslim should be trained to be a good missionary in order to transform the ignorant into practising Muslims. In the process of reforming (*iṣlah*) the society, the missionary should consider that *da`wah* is not merely rhetoric, emotional expression or struggling in a partial sense by neglecting other areas of endeavour, but to struggle in the path albeit full of challenges and obstacles arranged by Allāh as stated in the *Qur`ān*.⁹ This view seemingly goes far beyond the provisions of the *ABIM* constitution which only mentions *da`wah*, and says that it is subject to the approval of the respective Islamic departmental authorities in Malaysia.

Nonetheless, he admits the fact that this was the approach of *da`wah* which had already been performed by previous Islamic scholars (*Ulamā'*), both Muslim Fighters (*Mujāhid*) and *Sūfis*. In consequence, this method which succeeded in spreading and defending Islam in Malaysia should be followed by *ABIM*. He acknowledges this fact with:

*The latest historical developments have seen the figure of Burhanuddin al-Helmi with his clear and firm Islamic platform. Among the young Muslim generation, the role of da`wah organisations such as al-Rahmaniah which was active in the 1960s and then PKPIM, with Muslim Student Organisations in the Middle East and the West, have contributed to the emergence of ABIM. We admit to this contribution and would stand together with them in facing any challenge and obstacle in the near future.*¹⁰

Nevertheless, Anwar believed that *ABIM* should have its own method of implementing *da`wah* in Malaysia. First of all, he introduced the concept of unity of thought (*wiḥdah al-fikr*), which is important in focussing the

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:155.

¹⁰ Anwar Ibrahim, Presidential Speech in the 4th. *ABIM* Annual Assembly, 1975.

direction of the organisation. This concept is actually based on the concept of the unity of belief (*wiḥdah al-ʿAqīdah*) in Islam which suggests the method of practising the religion with knowledge (*ilm*) and is the way of reasoning of the prominent *ʿUlamāʾ* and *Fuqahāʾ*. This would avoid fanaticism (*taʿaṣṣub*) in defending secondary matters (*furūʿiyyah*) which might cause deviation from the fundamental aspects of Islam. By so doing, *ABIM* would be able to produce its own identity and approach to *daʿwah* and not merely copy the methods of other Islamic movements.

However, Anwar suggested that the concept of unity of thought would not dispute the variety of approaches among the Islamic movements, but would rather complement them. Islamic movements should apply the concept of organising upon agreed matters (*tartīb umūr maʿlūmāt*) in order to construct an effective methodology of *daʿwah* rather than confronting one another.¹¹ Apart from considering that all Islamic movements should be in one force performing *daʿwah*, this also suggests that Anwar accepted the validity of the approaches of other Islamic movements as a means to achieve the goal of *daʿwah* in Malaysia.

Nevertheless, Anwar laid emphasis upon the very fundamental teaching of *daʿwah* (*fiqh al-daʿwah*) that should be adhered to by all Islamic missionaries and movements. This teaching of *daʿwah* primarily contains the concept of “We are Islamic missionaries not Judges” (*Kami pendakwah bukan penghukum* or *Naḥnu duʿāt lā quḍāt*). Based on this teaching, he suggested that the missionary should not be too impetuous in his efforts to transform society. The missionary should in fact, call to all levels of society to join the movement, respecting them and admitting them with their weaknesses in the hope that they would change to be better Muslims in the future.¹² He supported this argument with the *Qurʾānic* verse:¹³

It is part of the Mercy of Allāh that thou dost deal gently with them. Were thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee: so pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allāh's) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou hast taken a decision, put thy trust in Allah. For Allāh loves those who put their trust (in Him).

However, he also warned that the *dāʿi*'s approach should not be so rigid that it might be broken, nor too lenient that it might bend (*Jangan keras sehingga*

¹¹ Anwar Ibrahim, Presidential Speech in the 6th. *ABIM* Annual Assembly, 1977.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Sūrah Āli-Imrān* 3:159.

mudah dipatahkan atau terlalu lembut sehingga mudah dilenturkan or *Lā Ifrād wa-lā Tafrīd*). In other words, he reminded them that this concept is applicable as far as it does not obstruct the concept of *Jihād*, which is also an important consideration for *da`wah*. This is due to the fact that the task of enjoining good and prohibiting evil (*al-Amr bi al-ma`rūf wa al-nahy`an al-munkar*) which is considered as the task of *da`wah* should be inspired by the spirit of *Jihād*. He regarded *Jihād* as very important, particularly in conducting the task of prohibiting evil (*nahy`an al-munkar*), although this practice could incite a negative response which might cause the movement to be seen as fanatical and comprised of religious zealots.

In order to strike a balance in *da`wah*, Anwar suggested that *ABIM* should maintain its identity as the Voice of the Nation (*Jurubicara Umat*) and the Chosen Group (*Safwat al-Mukhtārrah*) which stands obdurately against un-Islamic elements such as secularism. In the meantime, *ABIM* must also be able to offer an Islamic alternative to the people. This could be achieved through many activities, such as propagating the Islamic message through publications, seminars, discussions and debate. The organisation should also involve itself in education, social welfare and economic activities in order to prove that Islam has a role to play in all walks of life.¹⁴

From the above facts, one can state that Anwar Ibrahim clearly delineates some basic principles of *da`wah*. By reflecting upon the historical evidence of the *da`wah* or the mission of the Prophet, he decided that this method of *da`wah* should apply to the whole teaching of Islam as guided by *Qur`ān* and the *Sunnah*. Based on these, he made a significant remark, that *da`wah* should be based on certain fundamental principles, which he suggested is the mould for the radical and revolutionary approach of *da`wah* in *ABIM*.

SIDDIQ FADHIL ON DA`WAH

The co-optation of Anwar Ibrahim into the ruling party *UMNO* in 1982 shocked many people, particularly Islamic activists in Malaysia. Many suggested that his co-optation into this secular party would affect the commitment of *ABIM* to Islam. The new President of *ABIM*, Siddiq Fadhil (1982-1991),¹⁵ attempted to calm the shock by insisting in his first presidential speech in 1982, entitled “Major Guidelines of the Struggle” (*Garis-garis Besar Haluan Perjuangan*), that *ABIM* was still a movement of *da`wah*. In addition to declaring that *ABIM*

¹⁴ Anwar Ibrahim, Presidential Speech in the 9th. *ABIM* Annual Assembly, 1980.

¹⁵ Siddiq Fadhil had previously held the post of Vice President of *ABIM* (1979-1981), the Deputy President (1981-1982) and the President (1982-1991).

is the Party of God (*Hizbullāh*) and the Helpers of Allah (*Anṣārullāh*) which upholds Islam as performed by the prophets and apostles, Siddiq underlined some fundamental objectives to be achieved by *ABIM*, which substantially expanded the limits of its constitution. They were: constructing a Muslim personal character (*shakhṣiyyah Islāmiyyah*): establishing the Islamic family, forming an Islamic *Ummah*, establishing an Islamic state, forming an Islamic world and re-establishing the *Khilāfah* System.¹⁶

In order to achieve the above plans, Siddiq suggested that *ABIM* should be the best community performing the task of inviting people (*berdakwah*) to the good, enjoining right and forbidding evil.¹⁷ Primarily, he suggested the establishment of an elite group (“*as-Ṣafwatu al-Mukhtārrah*”) to be the intelligensia of the nation. Therefore, his view was that *ABIM* should not only produce qualified graduates from colleges or universities, but should also produce exalted *da`wah* missionaries inspired with the pure spirit of the *Sūfi* and the practical skills of the soldier (*Ṣūfiyyūn baht min al-Nāḥiyah al-Rūḥiyyah, wa` Askariyyūn baht min al-Nāḥiyah al-`Amaliyyah*). By following the model of the Prophet’s educational institution (*madrasah Rasūlillāh*), *ABIM* should be able to produce its own *da`wah* vanguard. Moreover, inspired by the slogan of *Ikhwān al-Muslimūn, Jihād is our way (al-Jihād Sabīlunā)*, *ABIM* should spread this inspiration among the youngsters.¹⁸

Fadhil seems to have believed that this strategy was one of the most practicable methods in *da`wah*. Therefore, he claimed that *da`wah* should not only be achieved through political means or activities. He argued that involvement in the democratic electoral system is not a fundamental method (*Uslūb Asāsī*) nor a core task (*Jawhar al-`Amal*) but merely a secondary matter (*Umūr Janabiyyah*). In addition, he emphasized that political activities should not be placed above the importance of the Islamic movement and the core practice of Islam itself (*Jawhar al-`Amal al-Islāmī*).¹⁹ Moreover, Fadhil explained the nature of *ABIM* as a non-partisan *da`wah* organisation which had many roles to play, as stated in the 1983 Annual Assembly, entitled “Responding the Challenge of the New Decade” (*Menyahut Cabaran Abad Kebangunan*):

¹⁶ Siddiq Fadhil (1989), “Garis-Garis Besar Haluan Perjuangan”, in *Koleksi Ucapan Dasar Mukhtamar Sanawi ABIM, Mengangkat Martabat Umat*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Pustaka Islam, p.4. This idea which can be considered as the *ABIM*’s main objective was also described by Mohammad Nor Manutty elsewhere in his study, see his thesis, “Perception of Social Change in Contemporary Malaysia”, p.227.

¹⁷ *Sūrah Āli-`Imrān* 3:104.

¹⁸ Siddiq Fadhil (1989), “Garis-Garis Besar Haluan Perjuangan”, *op.cit.*, p.19.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.25.

*We are not just a narrow-minded propagation body (tablīgh), we are not a welfare body in assisting disaster victims, we are not ballot hunters, we are not just a co-operative body collecting interest. We are an Islamic movement (ḥarakah Islāmiyyah) which rises to the task of implementing and dessiminating the complete heavenly revelation (risālah samawiyyah) to all mankind where ever they are. In front of us lies a great arena for us to explore as we distribute leaflets and as an Islamic educator (pentarbiyyah), as an Islamic missionary (pendakwah Islam), as a defender of those who are oppressed (mustaḍafīn), as the champion of the economic development of the Ummah, as a non-partisan symbol, as a peacemaker to those who need peace, and as a combatant to those who violate Allah's commandments. ABIM is an independent movement with its own platform and programme to fulfil its Islamic ambitions. ABIM is not a recruiting platform for any other bodies or movements.*²⁰

The last sentence in this quotation is merely a criticism of Anwar, who was believed by some to have regarded *ABIM* as a stepping stone before his cross over to *UMNO*. Nevertheless, Siddiq suggested that *ABIM* should maintain the moderate approach in *da`wah*. Therefore, he disagreed with the practice of blunt criticism of those who called others to Islam.²¹ This emphasis can be seen in his presidential speech of 1984, entitled “Missionary, the Builder of Belief and the Developer of the Nation” (*Da`i Pembina Aqidah Pembangunan Ummah*), when he developed the views of Ḥassan al-Bannā, Yūsuf al-Qarāḍāwī and Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, who rejected violence in *da`wah*. Yūsuf Qarāḍāwī, for instance, believed that Islam only legalises harshness in two circumstances; enacting God's law on criminals and in the face of enemies in battle.²²

On the basis of this understanding, Siddiq criticised those who abused the beauty of *da`wah* by applying harsh criticism for the sake of enjoining good and prohibiting evil. He is quoted as saying:

²⁰ Siddiq Fadhil (1989), “Menyahut Cabaran Abad Kebangunan”, in *Koleksi Ucapan Dasar Muktamar Sanawi ABIM, Mengangkat Martabat Umat*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Pustaka Islam, p.66.

²¹ Siddiq Fadhil said that although *ABIM* leaders generally did not agree with the desicion of Anwar to join *UMNO* in 1982, due to the spirit of *da`wah* they did not take action to punish him. Interview conducted with Siddiq Fadhil in his office at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi Selangor, 10 April 1995.

²² Siddiq Fadhil (1989), “*Da`i Pembina Aqidah Pembangunan Ummah*”, in *Koleksi Ucapan Dasar Muktamar Sanawi ABIM, Mengangkat Martabat Umat*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Pustaka Islam, pp.75-79.

Da`wah should not be solely confined to rhetoric. Amr ma`rūf should be applied orally and practically through the model of exemplary welfare works, with advice and concrete programmes. Amr ma`rūf should be extended to problem solving, preparing advice and practical answers to any immediate problems. This should also be applied to naḥy munkar which should be polished so as not to degrade nor be provocative with aggressive manners, or it could be beneficiary when a certain issue is being exploited. Naḥy munkar should be criticism without blame and the encouragement of debate. Moreover, it should be full of data and figures and given in a low pitched voice by the preacher, because the preacher is voicing the mind and mentality of mankind. For the dā`i is a saviour not the prosecutor of mankind (du`at lā quḍāt). His role should not be biased except to convey the word of Allāh that is to do what we are told and to obey those prohibitions.²³

One can guess that the above criticism was directed at PAS. This statement can be substantiated when we consider the calm of Siddiq Fadhil that ABIM had not applied the appellation *takfīr* (to brand as disbeliever) when commencing *da`wah*. Instead of this, he suggested the concept *du`at lā quḍā`* (a preacher is not a judge) which had been used a long time before by ABIM. He explained that the task of the *Qāḍi* is different from that of the *dā`ī*. The *Qāḍi* judges a person based on the offence and decides whether the offender should be sentenced or released. The task of a *dā`ī* on the other hand is to convey and to guide the lost to the righteous life; the sinner to repent; the ignorant to literacy and the infidel to Islam.²⁴

Siddiq also realised that the approach of *da`wah* which emphasizes politics would only cause a negative response amongst those who were called to Islam, particularly among non-Muslims. Henceforth, Siddiq Fadhil seriously wanted Islam to be propagated beyond the racial boundary. Serious efforts of *da`wah* such as special outreach activity should be launched in order to convert the non-Muslim communities, particularly the Chinese and Indians. Nevertheless, he admitted the fact that the success of *da`wah* on them largely depended on the success of Islamising Malays.²⁵

Therefore, he pursued a policy of criticising those Muslim politicians who only concentrated on political power and chasing new members. He claimed in his presidential speech of 1985 entitled "Organising Towards the Achievement of Islamic Activities" (*Menggembleng Tenaga Ke Arah*

²³ *Ibid.*, p.77.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.84-85.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.92.

Peningkatan Prestasi Amal Islami) that the political conflicts among Malay political parties could be solved through a code of ethics for disagreements that suggest cooperation in accepted matters and compromise in matters of dispute (*bekerjasama dalam hal-hal yang disepakati dan berkompromi dalam hal-hal yang diperselisihkan*). He also advised ABIM members not to regard power as the ultimate measure of success in *da`wah*. This may lead to a false impression of the goal of *da`wah*, thus neglecting the importance of education (*tarbiyyah*) as a core principle in reforming (*işlah*) society.²⁶

In addition, Fadhil suggested that ABIM should opt for a more moderate and liberal attitude as proposed in the concept of Islamic modernity (*wasafiyah al-Islām*) which he suggested in his presidential speech of 1986, entitled “Islamic Movement in the Malay World - Time Requirement and Encompassing Challenge” (*Gerakan Islam di Dunia Melayu - Tuntutan Zaman dan Cabaran Lingkungan*). He regarded the idea of Rashid Gannushi of Tunisia, who suggested the concept of realistic fundamentalism (*al-wāqiyah al-Mu`assalah* or *realistik yang berprinsip*), as the most applicable concept of *da`wah*. He therefore proposed that ABIM should be more realistic in facing the modern era but should not neglect the fundamental struggle of the Islamic movement. However, it is difficult to grasp his meaning when he referred to the important part played by PAS among other movements in struggles for Islam.²⁷ This very remarkable suggestion, which might cause confusion, will be discussed in the following section.

The importance of *tarbiyyah* in the context of *da`wah* in ABIM can be seen again in the presidential speech of Siddiq Fadhil in 1987, entitled “Strengthening the Platform, Activating *da`wah*: Towards the Building of the Best Nation” (*Perkuatkan Wadah, Perhebatkan Dakwah, Perteingkatkan Tarbiyyah: Menuju Pembinaan Tamadun Khayra Ummah*). Siddiq Fadhil argued that training (*tarbiyyah ḥarakiyyah*) among the ABIM members could produce Islamic cadres who would live the life of true Muslims, and then succeed in attracting others to Islam. A proper *tarbiyyah* would also provide intellectual ability which is useful in debates. Thus, it could convey the Islamic messages in a clearer and more effective way. *Tarbiyyah* can also build up a

²⁶ Siddiq Fadhil (1989), “Menggembeling Tenaga Ke Arah Peningkatan Prestasi Amal Islami”, *Koleksi Ucapan Dasar Mukhtar Sanawi ABIM, Mengangkat Martabat Umat*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Pustaka Islam, p.119.

²⁷ Siddiq Fadhil (1989), “Gerakan Islam di Dunia Melayu- Tuntutan Zaman dan Cabaran Lingkungan”, in *Koleksi Ucapan Dasar Mukhtar Sanawi ABIM, Mengangkat Martabat Umat*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Pustaka Islam, p.151.

thinking capacity for solving the problems of all aspects of life by promoting an Islamic alternative to the secular system.²⁸

He further stressed that *tarbiyyah ḥarakiyyah* in the social dimension (*jānib al-ijtimā'ī*) can produce social obligation or responsibility among Islamic missionaries. He developed the idea of Yūsuf Qarāḏāwī that *da`wah* can be performed through a programme of social services. Firstly, he pointed out that this task is actually commanded by Allāh. Secondly, *da`wah* cannot be confined to verbal and written activity only. Thirdly, not every missionary has the capability to preach and to write. Thus they should be involved in social and welfare activities as alternative ways of doing *da`wah*. Finally, the missionary should not wait until the establishment of an Islamic state to prove that Islam is capable of administration. In the meantime, the missionary could demonstrate the potential of an Islamic state through involvement in social and welfare activities.²⁹

In the next presidential speech of Siddiq Fadhil in 1988 entitled “Upholding the Nation Pride” (*Mengangkat Martabat Umat*), he emphasized that *da`wah* can also be applied in the context of politics through the application of morals (*Akhlāq*) in every aspect of political activity. For example, a politician must have the responsibility to struggle for Islam, and his life should be designed and programmed according to the religion of Islam. He claimed that *ABIM* should be the mediator in solving the political problems of the *Ummah*. This can be achieved through the application of the concept of Corrective Participation as performed by previous *‘ulamā’*. For example, he mentioned the role of *Mundhir Ibn Sa`īd*, a Qāḏī who participated in but was also critical of the expensive projects during the reign of Caliph `Abd al-Raḥmān al-Naṣīr in Spain.³⁰

Inspired by this understanding, Siddiq in his 19th. presidential speech of 1990 entitled “the Concern of the Ummah over the 1990s Political Scenario” (*Keperihatinan Ummat Dalam Senario Politik ‘90-an*), he required *ABIM* members to have an attitude of positive submission (*Ḥusn al-Ḍann*) towards the Islamization policy of the government rather than holding the negative

²⁸ Siddiq Fadhil (1989), “Perkuatkan Wadah, Perhebatkan Dakwah: Menuju Pembinaan Tamadun Khayra Ummah”, in *Koleksi Ucapan Dasar Mukhtar Sanawi ABIM, Mengangkat Martabat Umat*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Pustaka Islam, p.168.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.179-180.

³⁰ Siddiq Fadhil (1989), “Mengangkat Martabat Umat”, *Koleksi Ucapan Dasar Mukhtar Sanawi ABIM, Mengangkat Martabat Umat*, Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Pustaka Islam, p.198.

view reminiscent of the ill-founded mosque (*masjid dīrār*). He argued that from the perspective of *da`wah*, this effort can be considered as a process of implementing *Shari`ah* (*taṭbīq al-Shari`ah*). He also claimed that the process is different from what had happened during the coalition of *PAS* and the National Front (*Barisan Nasional*) in 1974, because they were not very serious towards fully implementing Islamization in the government. Thus, he encouraged *ABIM* members to play an active role in politics although he insisted that the organisation itself should consistently maintain its principle of being a non-partisan organisation.³¹ Instead of inclining to support *PAS* in politics, he further announced a new political aspiration for *ABIM* in that speech as:

*All of you are faced with a vital issue, the issue regarding the present government, with all its weaknesses and strengths - whether or not we need an alternative that is a true alternative? We pose the following: Is the alternative that is offered truly an alternative? Whether or not the fronts that label themselves as alternative are those who are really prepared as an alternative? As an organisation that advocates Islamic aspirations, which of course entails political aspirations: we wish to caution you to go for the front, which is competent in fulfilling the trust (amānah) in the context of the aspiration of Islamic politics. We advance these ideas before you so that you ponder over them in making our decision.*³²

In his last presidential speech in 1991 entitled “Islamic Movements in the ‘90s Vision and Strategy” (*Gerakan Islam Era 1990an, Visi dan Strategi*), Siddiq Fadhil, further claimed that the above understanding of *da`wah* indicated the maturing of *ABIM*. This included the changing of orientation from table banging to problem solving and from the confrontational approach to the diplomacy of dialogue. He claimed that this change reflected the wisdom of *da`wah* in *ABIM* and he also suggested that *ABIM* should be more aggressive and innovative in inventing a new formula for *da`wah* when considering that Malaysia is different from other Islamic states such as Iran or Egypt. Realising the necessity of the Malaysian method (*manhaj Malayzī*) in *da`wah*, he suggested that *ABIM* should maintain its moderate approach in *da`wah* and activate the process of corrective participation in the government.³³

³¹ Siddiq Fadhil, “Keperihatinan Ummat Dalam Senario Politik ‘90-an”, Presidential Speech at the 19th. *ABIM* Annual Assembly, 1990.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Siddiq Fadhil (1990), *Islamic Movement in the ‘90’ Vision and Strategy*, Petaling Jaya: *ABIM*, p.4.

From the above facts, one can say that the idea of *da`wah* as presented by Siddiq Fadhil covers a wide range of meanings. Nevertheless, sometimes his ideas seem to be contradictory. For example, on the one hand he called for political activity but on the other he advocated obstinate opposition to the state. However, unlike Anwar Ibrahim, Siddiq at the end of his term of office tended to be more liberal in specifying how *da`wah* should be best carried out in *ABIM*. This suggests that there was an extensive ideological transformation of *da`wah* from radical to more moderate under his leadership.

MOHAMMAD NOR MANUTTY ON *DA`WAH*

Mohammad Nor Manutty who replaced Siddiq Fadhil as the third *ABIM* President (1992 to 1996) further developed this moderate understanding of *da`wah* in the organisation. In his first presidential speech in 1992, entitled “To Strengthen the Footsteps of the Struggle in Facing the Changing Era” (*Memperteguhkan Khittah Perjuangan Menghadapi Era Perubahan*), he pointed out that *ABIM* should be transformed in order to cope with the change of modernity. He quoted the *Ḥadīth* that indicates that time is fast moving (*Inna al-zamān qad istadar*) in justification of *ABIM* preparing for further changes which might also affect the understanding of *da`wah*.³⁴

As with Siddiq, Mohammad Nor believed in the moderate understanding of *da`wah* as inspired by the principle of Islamic modernity (*wasafīyyah al-Islām*). This was considered by him as the most applicable in approaching the modern world because it combines the orientation of the practice of Islamic tradition as in the early stage of Islam (*salaf*) and the principle of reformism in Islam (*tajdīd*), and would enable *ABIM* to moderate change with the fundamental teachings of Islam. He further suggested that this sort of understanding would make *ABIM* more open-minded in performing *Ijtihad* to explore the practicable method of *da`wah* in Malaysia.³⁵ The need for *ijtihad* in *da`wah* is clearly explained by Mohammad Nor as follows:

*In fact, da`wah is not performed in a vacuum but is in a setting of society that has a variables. Da`wah is not provided for a particular society in a particular time, but thus it is most important to predict the tendencies of the society in the future due to the process of change.*³⁶

³⁴ Mohammad Nor Manutty, “Memperteguhkan Khittah Perjuangan Menghadapi Era Perubahan”, Presidential Speech at the 21th.*ABIM* Annual Assembly, 1992.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Based on this understanding, he suggested an integrated *da`wah* or functional *da`wah* (*da`wah bi al-hāl*). This means that *da`wah* should be integrated in the activities of the community. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the Islamic missionary should be immersed into the community, but should be updated and aware of any activity or programme existing in the community. As a result, this integration or flexible approach, as long as it does not contradict Islamic principles, would in the end prove that Islam is a functional religion to the community. He pointed to two examples of this approach, namely the programme of Development and Community Participation (*Program Pembangunan dan Penyertaan Komuniti* or PPPK) and Islamic Outreach - *ABIM*.³⁷

By investigating the reality of modern changes, Mohammad believed that Islam could be presented more convincingly and as a tolerant religion to the people. This can be grasped from the message of his Presidential Speech at the 22nd. *ABIM* Annual Assembly, entitled “The Clash of Culture: The *Ummah* Agenda” (*Pertembungan Budaya: Agenda Umat*), where he quoted prominent writers such as Fukuyama, Esposito and Huntington, who strongly predicted that Islam is the next potential superpower after the collapse of Communist Russia. He seriously noted that this prediction would incite a negative response, particularly by those who regard Islam as a threat to the world, and this would affect the success of *da`wah* in *ABIM*.³⁸

For this reason Mohammad Nor considered that the approach of *da`wah*, particularly in Malaysia, must also consider the multi-racial communities which consist of different religions, languages, cultures and social backgrounds. In consideration of these factors, he introduced the concept of the political jurisdiction of the *Shari`ah* (*siyāsah Shar`iyyah*), which he felt was relevant to the consolidation of Islam in the country. He believed that this system can be applied in Malaysia for the benefit of the majority. Moreover, the significance of this concept in implementing Islam in a very gradual approach was explained by Mohammad Nor Manutty as:

This concept is just an application of the *Shar`iyyah* principle in the Islamic political system for the reason of fulfilling the needs of its citizens, to avoid any unfavourable dissatisfaction, to produce a harmonised society with general *Shari`ah* ethics, even though it sometimes may clash with the Jurists’ (*Mujtahid*) point of view. Therefore, the policy of *siyāsah Shar`iyyah*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Mohammad Nor Manutty, “Pertembungan Budaya: Agenda Umat”, Presidential Speech at the 22th. *ABIM* Annual Assembly, 1993.

is always bound to the concept of *Shari'ah* that is based on the principles of fixed (*thawābit*) and flexible (*mutaghayyir*).³⁹

Based on this understanding, he further criticised the view that the legitimacy of *siyāsah Shar'iyyah* would only be achieved through the total application of *Shari'ah* in the constitution. Instead, he saw that the Malaysian constitution does not prevent any development of Islam, although this religion is merely considered in its ritual and ceremonial aspects. Unlike Pakistan, which is an Islamic state, he strongly believed that Malaysia will be more advanced through the policy of Islamization even though it is considered as a secular state. In brief, he claimed that the practical result of *da`wah* is the substance and not the form of the state.⁴⁰

The moderate transformation of *da`wah* was further developed during the leadership of Mohamed Nor. In his Presidential Speech of 1994 entitled "The Strength of the Nation - Producing the Generation of the 21st Century" (*Ketahanan Umat - Penjanaan Generasi Abad 21*), he introduced the concept of the Teaching of Priority (*Fiqh al-Awlawiyyāt*). This jurisprudential concept which was derived from the ideas of Dr. Yūsuf al-Qarāḏāwī suggested that the missionary should first of all consider the priority of his action before implementing any Islamic programme, because it could affect the success of *da`wah*. To ignore this would show the same rigid attitude (*jumūd*) as those Islamic scholars and missionaries who prefer to emphasize a less significant approach or aspect.⁴¹

The application of steps towards this concept were mentioned by Mohammad Nor in his Presidential Speech of 1995, entitled "Securing the *Ummah* from Moral Destruction" (*Menyelamatkan Umat Dari Kebejatan Moral*) where he clearly declared that education is the priority of *da`wah* in *ABIM*. Nevertheless, he also encouraged active participation in the economy to produce Muslim corporate business which he believed would contribute to the development of *da`wah*. In achieving this goal, he suggested a few Islamic principles or ethical practices such as donations in the way of God (*infāq fī sabīl Allāh*) which should be cultivated and expanded among the Muslim *Ummah*. This would not only economically benefit them, but also would contribute to the task of *da`wah*. He suggested that Muslims should follow in the footsteps of the giant Muslim merchants such as Abū Bakr, `Abd

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Mohammad Nor Manutty, "Ketahanan Umat- Penjanaan Generasi Abad 21", Presidential Speech at the 23th. *ABIM* Annual Assembly, 1994.

al-Raḥmān Ibn `Awf, `Uthmān Ibn `Affān and others who spent a large portion of their profits towards the expansion of Islam and *da`wah*.⁴²

The reformation of *da`wah* towards moderation can be seen further in the presidential speech of Mohammad Nor in 1996, entitled “Islamic Movement and Social Transformation - Towards the Next Millenium” (*Gerakan Islam dan Transformasi Sosial - Menuju Alaf Baru*). He claimed that the success of the Refah Party in the General Election in Turkey was primarily based on its moderate approach. He underlined seven objectives which in many aspects differed from the idea of Siddiq Fadhil in his first presidential speech in 1982. They are as follows:

- i. After having spent 25 years as an Islamic movement, veteran *ABIM* members now hold various important and influential positions both in the corporate as well as public sector. *ABIM* should maximise the professionalism and wide experience of its members. We should perform a grand design that would strengthen *ABIM* in particular and Muslims generally.
- ii. *ABIM* would like to make concerted efforts in establishing community development programmes in rural and urban areas.
- iii. *ABIM* will make efforts to develop the potential of children who are currently enrolled in *TASKI*, *SRI* and *SMI*. It is our fervent hope that the potential of these children, who number around 20,000, will be developed to the fullest, in mind, spirit and body.
- iv. *ABIM* is also concerned about the fate of Muslims all over the world. *ABIM* leaders have recently formed Malaysian Relief International (*MRI*) which functions as a platform for voluntary activities at the international level.
- v. *ABIM* exhorts its leaders and members to utilize media technology with a positive mind frame while being critical to software.
- vi. With the present world moving towards pluralism, *ABIM* should step up efforts to hold dialogue with different races and civilizations.
- vii. *ABIM*'s vision towards the next millennium can only be achieved by being an Islamic movement. The line has to be drawn in distinguishing a social organisation that is merely concerned with welfare matters from an Islamic movement that possesses its own Islamic characteristics.⁴³

⁴² Mohammad Nor Manutty, “Menyelamatkan Umat Dari Kebejatan Moral”, Presidential Speech at the 24th. *ABIM* Annual Assembly, 1995.

⁴³ Mohammad Nor Manutty, “Gerakan Islam dan Transformasi Sosial- Menuju Alaf Baru”, Presidential Speech at the 25th. *ABIM* Annual Assembly, 1996.

This moderate approach in understanding *da`wah* was further strengthened by Mohammad Nor in his recent Presidential Speech of 1997, entitled “Islam and the Independent Soul” (*Islam dan Jiwa Merdeka*). He suggested that the cooperation between two of the main Malay political parties namely *UMNO* and *PAS* is important for the further development of Islam in Malaysia. The conflict between these two can be solved by applying *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyāt* (the Rule of Priority) which is more concerned with the survival of Muslim political power in the country and doing away with power struggle among themselves. Unlike previous *ABIM* leaders, he highlighted the role of Dr. Mahathir as the person who had contributed largely to the development of Islam in post independence Malaysia. Without mentioning the role of *PAS*, he regarded their efforts as the continuation of the attempts performed by Burhanuddin al-Helmi and other Muslim scholars.⁴⁴

From the above statements, one may say that the understanding of *da`wah* as being perceived by Mohammad Nor is primarily based upon the moderate approach. Although in many ways he suggested that Islam should be presented in accordance with the requirements of modern changes, he still claimed that such an understanding was basically justified by religious principles. Inspired by this understanding, he stressed several new liberal approaches, which significantly differed from those of the previous leaders of *ABIM*.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, one can say that there has been a massive development in the understanding of *da`wah* through the leadership of the three leaders of *ABIM*. Beginning with the simple meaning of calling people to Islam, *da`wah* is associated with many terms and aspects which can all be considered as steps towards achieving the goal of Islamization in Malaysia. *Da`wah* which was characterised in a more radical approach by Anwar Ibrahim (1974-1982) has been gradually changed. It was during the leadership of Siddiq Fadhil that *da`wah* was gradually transformed into a less confrontational practice. This transition period 1982 to 1991, to some extent exposed some of the contradictory ideas of Siddiq Fadhil in presenting the approach of *da`wah* to the organisation. The leadership period of Dr. Muhammad Nor Manutty (1992-1997) and onwards is marked by the inculcation of many moderate ideas in *da`wah*. Nevertheless, the moderate approach as promoted by *ABIM* in the late 1990 had been severely challenged by the incident of Anwar Saga

⁴⁴ Mohammad Nor Manutty, “Islam dan Jiwa Merdeka”, Presidential Speech at the 26th. *ABIM* Annual Assembly, 1997.

in 1998, where the organisation gradually took a critical approach toward the ruling government.

As far as the idea of *da`wah* is concerned, one may say that the term *da`wah* seems to be presented by *ABIM* in its generally understood meaning by the Malays. It has primarily been referred to the specific tasks of propagation and education, suggesting that *da`wah* means calling people to Islam through the methods of propagation and education. Since this traditional meaning of *da`wah* has been preserved in the constitution without any amendment or change until the present day, the interpretation of *da`wah* in *ABIM* has largely depended on its leaders who might be more flexible in extending the meaning of this term. They have associated *da`wah* with notions such as social welfare, economics and corrective participation in the government. This makes the interpretation of *da`wah* more dynamic.