Politics and Islamisation in Aceh: An Update

Dr Arskal Salim
Postdoctoral Fellow, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Germany

TOPIC

Aceh has been the site of a most radical and far-reaching attempt at legal Islamisation in modern Indonesia. As a result of the April 2009 election in Aceh, however, a non-religious party (Partai Aceh) now dominates the provincial legislature. The current governor, Irvandi Yusuf, who commenced his term in early 2007, supports this party’s more secular objectives. These developments are likely to change the direction of forthcoming Islamic legislation and thus the implementation of shari’a (Islamic law) in Aceh. Some critics even doubt that the current Islamisation of laws in Aceh will continue at all. This is because the implementation of shari’a-influenced legislation in Aceh is, in fact, part of a broader struggle between different groups contesting social and political control. The next five years will thus be crucial in deciding whether legal Islamisation in Aceh will be halted or deepened.

Three cases will be discussed in this talk. First, two current bills on jinayah (Islamic penal law) are under discussion, and the outcome of that debate will reveal the current political climate and suggest the future of Islamic legislation over the next five years. Second, the establishment of the Partai Aceh-sponsored ulama council (MUNA or Majelis Ulama Nanggroe Aceh) in 2008 directly challenges the Ulama Consultative Assembly (MPU) and its political influence. Third, this talk will examine the emerging roles of redefined customary institutions in dispute settlements in Aceh, and examine the extent to which the jurisdiction of the shari’a courts (Mahkamah Syar’iyyah) has been affected.

PRESENTER

Arskal Salim completed his undergraduate degree at the Syariah Faculty, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) Jakarta, Indonesia. He received his PhD from the Faculty of Law, University of Melbourne in August 2006. Since then, he has been at the Max Planck Institute. He spent ten months in 2007 and 2008 in Aceh conducting fieldwork on legal pluralism and preparing a monograph with the working title, “Law as Contested Field: Custom, Religion and the State in Aceh”. Arskal’s publications include: Shari’a and Politics in Modern Indonesia (Singapore: ISEAS, 2003); The Shift in Zakat Practice in Indonesia (Chiang Mai: Silkwormbooks, 2008); and Challenging the Secular State: The Islamization of Law in Modern Indonesia (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008).

When: Tuesday 18 August, 2009
6.00 PM Refreshments, 6:30 PM Seminar
8:00PM Dinner

Where: Lecture Theatre 102, Level 1
Melbourne Law School
185 Pelham Street, Carlton

RSVP: Asian Law Centre
REGISTER ONLINE: www.alc.law.unimelb.edu.au
or Tel: (03) 8344 6847

RSVP by 10th August. Bookings essential for catering purposes. There is no charge for the seminar or the dinner.

This Seminar is proudly supported by the Asian Law Centre and the Indonesia Forum as part of
The University of Melbourne’s Asia Week.
The ALC Occasional Seminar Series is proudly supported by the Attorney-General’s Department.

Photo Credit: Binsar Bakkara