

The Wounds of the 1909 Anglo-Siamese Treaty Will Never Heal Until the Caliphate is Established

The series of simultaneous bomb attacks across 51 locations that rocked the southern provinces of Thailand at the end of last August has once again opened the world's eyes to the unhealed wounds of the Muslim Ummah. Behind the accusations and the prolonged sequence of conflicts, a truth often concealed by the enemies of Islam is the historical origin of the land. The provinces of Southern Thailand, which encompass Patani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satun, and parts of Songkhla, are a colonized portion of the lands of the Muslims.

The suffering of the Muslims there began with the fall of the Islamic Sultanate of Patani – a sovereign kingdom that once sheltered the vast majority of these territories. However, the greatest scheme that officially divided the Muslims occurred through the Anglo-Siamese Treaty (Treaty of Bangkok) in 1909. Through this treaty, the British and Siamese colonial Kuffar (disbelievers) arbitrarily drew false borders to divide their dominance over the Malay Peninsula. The British took Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah, and Perlis, while the provinces of Patani, Yala, Narathiwat, Songkhla, and Satun were handed over to Siam.

The consequences of the 1909 Treaty have been deeply tragic and enduring. The Muslims, who once lived united as a single entity of brotherhood in the Malay Peninsula, were forcibly separated by geographical borders created by colonialists. The Muslims in these Southern Siamese provinces were forced to submit to oppressive assimilation policies, where Islamic education was restricted, their identity and mother tongue were systematically erased, and their lands were confiscated.

The situation worsened when the Siamese government, under Prime Minister Plaek Phibunsongkhram, introduced the Ratthaniyom (Cultural Mandates) policy beginning in the late 1930s. This chauvinistic policy aimed to force total cultural assimilation upon all citizens to forge a single national identity based on Buddhist values and Thai culture. It was a calculated plan by the Kuffar regime to completely obliterate the Islamic identity that had long been deeply rooted in the region.

As a result of this Ratthaniyom policy, Muslims in Southern Thailand faced legal, cultural, and intellectual oppression. The use of the Malay language in official affairs and the Islamic education system were restricted, Islamic symbols were targeted for eradication, and Muslims were even forced to change their names to Siamese ones. To make matters worse, the Sharia Courts, which had managed some of the religious affairs of the Muslim population, were abolished and forcibly replaced by Thailand's civil legal system.

A Prolonged Crisis: The Consequence of Nation-State Borders

In recent decades, the pleas and struggles to reclaim the Muslims' rights in these provinces have been continually met with regime brutality, causing the blood of Muslims to be spilled from time to time on their own land. This tyranny culminated in the dark history of the Tak Bai Incident on October 25, 2004, which occurred while the Muslims were fasting during the month of Ramadan.

The tragedy began when Muslims gathered peacefully in front of the Tak Bai Police Station to demand the release of six of their brothers who had been unjustly detained. However, the Thai regime responded with live ammunition. The fasting Muslims were beaten, forced to strip off their shirts and lie face down with their hands tied behind their backs; they were then transported and stacked on top of each other in military trucks like logs of wood.

As a result of this inhumane cruelty, 85 lives were lost, 78 of whom died of suffocation en route to the Inkayuthaboriharn Camp. Although more than two decades have passed, not a single military perpetrator has been brought to justice, proving how cheaply the lives of Muslims are treated by the regime.

To this day, the aspirations of the struggle in Southern Thailand continue to resonate, albeit quietly. Recently, the Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Patani (BRN), regarded as the largest separatist group there, articulated demands for self-rule (autonomy) over the three restive provinces (Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat).

They proposed a power-sharing administration that includes the appointment of a Muslim Wali al-Amri (leader), a Shura (consultative) Council, and a Sharia court judicial system. The issue of the unjust distribution of natural resource wealth was also raised, particularly concerning the gas reserves in Southern Thai waters shared bilaterally by the Thai and Malaysian governments, without regard for the local population residing in the region.

On the diplomatic stage, the Malaysian government has long played the role of facilitator or mediator in the Southern Thailand Peace Dialogue Process. Several rounds of negotiations bringing together representatives of the Royal Thai Government and confrontational groups, particularly the BRN, have been arranged in Kuala Lumpur.

However, Malaysia's role as a mediator is, in reality, still constrained by the framework of nation-state diplomacy and colonial borders. These endless negotiations merely seek compromises that continuously recognize Thailand's sovereignty and constitution over those 'Ushriyyah (tithed) lands, rather than acting as a true shield for the Muslims genuinely seeking to liberate an oppressed territory that once were part of the Malay Lands itself.

From one perspective, the desire of the Muslims in this region to be governed by a Muslim leader and to have Sharia courts demonstrates that the innate nature of faith still exists within them. Yet, as Muslims who are obligated to view every issue from the perspective of Shara' (Islamic law), the question that must be asked is: are demands for autonomy or peace negotiations under the framework of a Kufr (disbelieving) state (Thailand) a solution that aligns with the Islamic method?

The Future of the Muslim Ummah

Truly, Southern Thailand is a territory inseparable from the rest of the Muslim lands. All Muslim lands constitute a single unified territory and must be united under one government, one leader, and one banner. Therefore, resolving the problems of the Muslims in Southern Thailand demands the total liberation of the territory from colonial occupation, no different from the plight of the Muslims in Palestine.

The issue of Southern Thailand cannot be resolved through the framework of demanding autonomy by creating yet another "nation-state." The solution also cannot stem from the struggle of nationalism or tribalism. The struggle for independence in Southern Thailand requires the Muslims to completely secede from Thailand and subsequently merge with the rest of the Muslim lands under the framework of the Caliphate state.

The unification of all Muslim territories into a single state entity is a Sharia obligation. The Muslims are one Ummah; their Deen is one, their Lord is one, their Prophet is one, their Book is one, and their state must also be one. Allah (swt) says **﴿إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ﴾** **“Indeed, this religion of yours is a single religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me.”** [Al-Anbiya' (21): 92]. In another verse, Allah (swt) strictly commands the Muslims to unite and forbids division **﴿وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا﴾** **“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided.”** [Aali 'Imran (3): 103].

Therefore, no Muslim can stand by and leave the struggle of their brothers in Southern Thailand isolated, just as it is impermissible to leave the struggle of their brothers in Palestine alone. Indeed, the suffering endured by the Muslims in Southern Thailand stems from one primary root cause: the lack of political will from all Muslim rulers, particularly Malaysia as the original owner of the territory, to reclaim it from the Thai government.

Since the fall of the Caliphate (Khilafah) in 1924, there has been no Islamic political institution to safeguard and protect the Muslim Ummah and their lands. Thus, the struggle of the Muslims, including those in Southern Thailand, must be galvanized toward re-establishing the Caliphate on the global stage, and it should not be narrowed down to nationalistic struggles or demands for mere autonomy.

Insha Allah, the Caliphate will rise again, and its establishment will begin in one of the territories willed by Allah (swt). With the establishment of the Caliphate, the Muslims will have a Caliph who acts as a Junnah (shield). This Caliph will mobilize the Muslim armies to liberate every inch of colonized Muslim land, including the entire territory of Southern Thailand, through the path of Jihad. This aligns with the saying of the Messenger of Allah (saw) «إِنَّمَا الْإِمَامُ جُنَّةٌ يُقَاتِلُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِ وَيَتَّقَى بِهِ» **"Indeed, the Imam (Caliph) is a shield, behind whom you fight and by whom you are protected."** [Sahih Muslim].

The noble aspirations of the Muslims in Southern Thailand to live holistically under the Sharia will never be genuinely realized at the negotiating table or through any peace talks under a secular system or autonomous rule that remains within the grip of a Kuffar regime. The same applies to demands over natural resources such as oil and gas – which are part of al-Milkiyyah al-Ammah (public property) that can only be managed fairly and equitably by the Caliphate to return its benefits to the Ummah.

Conclusion

Indeed, the suffering and oppression of the Muslims will never end as long as this Ummah lacks a shield to protect it. On that basis, it is incumbent upon every Muslim to unite their resolve and work to restore the Islamic way of life through the establishment of the Caliphate. Only beneath the unfurled banners of al-Liwa' and ar-Rayah will Southern Thailand be liberated again, by the permission of Allah (swt), standing firmly united with all other Muslim countries, and Islam will once again lead the world with mercy and justice.

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