before 2001. As one commentator emphasised, ignoring this issue to date could be viewed as an insult to the innocent victims of grave human rights abuses and tends to provide a green light for a repeat of such crimes in the future.

Although some strong polarisation of views exists, especially regarding the stationing of US bases in the country after 2014, there was close similarity in many views between the “scholars” and the “students” indicating an absence of generational dissidence. Hopefully, the leaders that the students aspire to be at the helm of the post-Karzai government will lead them to the generally optimistic outcome they are anticipating. Our fervent prayer is that they will not be disappointed.

International Forum on "The Plight of Muslims in Burma in the 21st Century" (Kuala Lumpur, 19 June 2013)

Elmira Akhmetova, IAIS Malaysia

A one-day international forum entitled The Plight of Muslims in Burma in the 21st Century: An Initiative for Solution & the Way Forward was held on 19 June 2013 at IAIS Malaysia to search for remedies to the ongoing ethnic violence, segregation, displacement, forcible expulsions and religious intolerance afflicting Muslim minorities in Myanmar. It explored the ways to create a sympathetic atmosphere for refugees who are victims of genocide and humiliation. Potential methods of applying pressure on the Burmese authorities to stop maltreatment and violence against Muslims and to safeguard their dignity and rights as citizens were also discussed during the forum, which was attended by more than 400 participants.

The event was jointly organised by IAIS Malaysia, Rohingya Arakanese Refugee Committee (RARC) and Burma Muslim Community (BMC). Contributing partners included the International Movement for a Just World (JUST), Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), Malaysian Youth Council (MBM), Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam Universiti Malaya (PMIUM), Jaringan Anak Muda (JAM), Al-Fikrah.Net, Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR), The Cordoba Foundation (TCF, United Kingdom), the Diplomatic Institute of The State of Qatar (TDI) and the Global Movement of Moderates Foundation (GMMF). Media representatives covering the forum were Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM), TV Al-Hijrah, Radio IKIM FM, Al-Jazeera International, The Arakan Observer Group, Rohingya Vision TV, Sinar Harian, Aswaq Magazine and Amilin TV.
The Forum featured five speakers, with the Opening Speech delivered by Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Founding Chairman & CEO, IAIS Malaysia) and the Keynote Address by H.E. Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (Former Prime Minister of Malaysia & Patron of IAIS). In his address, Professor Kamali underlined the reasons behind the tragedy of Muslims in Burma and urged the audience to stand for justice and human dignity. Tun Abdullah Badawi proclaimed that keeping peace and security in the region is the responsibility of Muslims, the largest religious group in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region. He urged Muslim minorities in the region, particularly those in Myanmar, to give priority to education and work in tandem with non-Muslim communities for the betterment of their countries.

The first panellist Dr Chandra Muzaffar (President of JUST) suggested that the root problem in Myanmar is mainly related to the military mindset of the regime, which is incompetent to face conflicts or secure its citizens from brutality and aggression. He urged the ASEAN governments to adopt more proactive approach to persuade and pressure the Burmese government to stop the genocide against the Rohingyas and other Muslim minority groups in Myanmar. Dr Chandra further called for the Muslim-Buddhist dialogue, stating that these two religions have many ethical values in common, and their joint efforts may create the best hope for spiritual and ethical renaissance in the ASEAN region.

The second paper presenter Dr Maung Zarni (Research Fellow at the London School of Economics and Senior Research Fellow at the Department of History, University of Malaya) affirmed that what is now happening in Myanmar is not simply a clash between Buddhists and Muslims on the basis of their religious differences, but a state-sponsored mass violence targeting Rohingyas and other minority Muslim groups with plain racist objectives. The third panellist Mr Mohammed Sadek (Program Coordinator, RARC) suggested several immediate solutions for the emergency in the region, including: introduction of a tripartite dialogue between the Burmese government, Muslim victims and the regional/international community; establishment of an alternative ASEAN task force for Myanmar; submission of petitions to regional and world leaders for protection of Muslims and their safety in Myanmar; and organising of international forums, seminars and roundtables to publicise the plight of Burmese Muslims. The fourth speaker Mr Saw Clo Say (Special Advisor to Burma Muslim Community) presented photographic evidence of the violence against Muslim minorities in Myanmar. The last speaker Mr Mohamad Raimi Bin Ab Rahim (Secretary General, ABIM) set forth practical proposals to improve the wellbeing and security of Burmese refugees in Malaysia. A lively question and answer session followed the presentations.