



Mustafa Akyol puts banned book online for free

FMT Reporters

May 5, 2019

Turkish academic Mustafa Akyol has released an online Malay edition of his book on Islam which had been banned in Malaysia since September 2017.

Last month, the High Court upheld the decision of the previous government to ban three books, including “Islam Tanpa Keekstreman: Berhujah Untuk Kebebasan”, the Malay edition of Akyol’s book Islam Without Extremes.

The court said it was satisfied with the former home minister’s excuse in imposing the ban, with the presiding judge, Nordin Hassan saying the contents of the book were likely to be “prejudicial to public order and interest and likely to alarm public opinion.”

Akyol described the decision as ridiculous authoritarianism.

“The most shocking idea in my book that can ‘alarm public opinion’ is that Islam should not be coerced,” he wrote on the website of the Cato Institute, a US-based public policy research organisation.

Neither he nor the Malaysian authorities should have the final say on the matter, Akyol said. “It must be up to Malay Muslims who are interested in the topic and who have the right to make up their mind,” he said.

He said he had permission from his publisher, the Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF), to share the book online.

Akyol, a strong advocate of free speech in Muslim countries, has frequently criticised both the Islamists and secularists in his home country.

His trip to Malaysia in 2017, his fifth, drew protests from conservative Muslim groups and Islamic authorities.

The US-based academic was arrested at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) as he was preparing to board a flight to Rome, hours after officers of the Federal Territory Islamic Affairs Department (Jawi) forced a lecture at Nottingham University’s Kuala Lumpur campus to be called off.

Jawi had also summoned IRF director Dr Ahmad Farouk Musa for hosting Akyol, and had said that its actions were based on a “complaint from the public” about a speech titled “Does freedom of conscience open the floodgate to apostasy?” which Akyol had delivered at the Royal Selangor Golf Club in Kuala Lumpur.