



Now Malaysians can read Akyol's banned book 'Islam without Extremes' for free online

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Turkish writer Mustafa Akyol has put up for free online the Malay translation of his book on liberalism and Islam that Malaysia had banned.

Akyol said he found Malaysia's "authoritarianism" ridiculous after the High Court upheld last month the ban of his book *Islam without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty*, along with its Malay-language edition, *Islam Tanpa Keekstreman: Berhujah Untuk Kebebasan*, on grounds that the book could hurt public order and alarm public opinion.

"The most shocking idea in my book that can 'alarm public opinion' is that Islam should not be coerced," Akyol wrote on US-based public policy research organisation Cato Institute's website, where *Islam Tanpa Keekstreman: Berhujah Untuk Kebebasan* is available for free downloads.

"Or, as the Qur'an says, 'There should be no compulsion in religion' (2:256) If there is something alarming in this whole scene, it is the very banning of such reasoned arguments on crucial matters about the practice of Islam in the modern world."

Noting that his publisher, the Islamic Renaissance Front (IRF), has granted him publishing permission to share his book online, he said Malay-Muslims have a right to make up their own minds regarding the issue.

"Therefore, with the generous permission of the Islamic Renaissance Front, I have decided to share the Malay edition of my book, *Islam without Extremes*, here on the Cato Institute website. All Malaysians — and of course everybody else — are welcome to download *Islam Tanpa Keekstreman: Berhujah Untuk Kebebasan* and read it for themselves."

In October 2017, then Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi under the Barisan Nasional administration banned Akyol's book and its Malay translation, claiming that it violated Malaysian societal norms.

In September 2017, Akyol was also detained by Malaysian Islamic authorities for a talk he was giving on the commonalities between the Abrahamic religions.

In a *New York Times* opinion piece back then, Akyol said he was only released partly because former Turkish president Abdullah Gul had pulled some strings with a Malaysian royalty.

The book's back cover also features a review by current Education Minister Maszlee Malik, who was then a University Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia lecturer.