

LETTERS

JOURNALISM

Be responsible journalists

I REFER to Syed Nadzri's commentary "Budding journo's in our schools" (NST, April 21).

As a student taking a course in journalism, I am amazed to see students who are interested in pursuing journalism for their future career.

Today, we are exposed to western media and local people always refer to well-known news channels such as BBC and CNN.

Living in Malaysia, there are a large number of Muslim students studying journalism.

As long as you consider yourself a Muslim, you have already vowed to follow the rules and regulations of the religion. So, it is important to implement Islamic values in journalism if a Muslim chooses it as a career.

Sami Al-Haj, a reporter from Al-Jazeera, once went through the most bitter period of his life when he was detained in Guantanamo Bay for seven years.

The Sudanese Muslim journalist, the only member of the crew that was detained in the United States camp, said in an interview with *The Guardian*, "Even if you put someone in hell, they are going to say it's great, because they just left Guantanamo."

Sami, who was taken to the harshest camp, was left frustrated with the media, as they did not cover the situation in Guantanamo Bay when the detainees were still suffering.

The former cameraman, who has been campaigning on behalf of the detainees, told *The Guardian* how he survived the ordeal.

"Two things helped me.

"First, my faith. I know that God would not abandon me because He knew I was innocent.

"Second, my profession.

"I lived inside Guantanamo as a journalist. It was a chance for me to live among the detainees, see how they dealt with (their situation) and hear their stories."

According to my lecturer, Dr Osama Kanaker, a true Muslim journalist has to obey three main ethics based on the Islamic perspective — which are having a strong relationship with Allah, their audience and their own self.

Osama said, "To be a Muslim journalist, a strong faith in Him as the Almighty is the most important element as it will make

you automatically differentiate between the dos and don'ts."

The relationship between the journalist and his audience is compulsory and must always be complied with, as the journalist must be able to give benefit to the audience through his work which contains wisdom, honesty, truth and information.

It is stated in the Quran: "O, you who believe! Have *taqwa* (piety/faith) of Allah and speak (always) the truth" (Al-Ahzab, 33:70). This is because a journalist is a source that people will always trust as they spread and give facts.

The third criteria is the relationship with yourself. This includes knowledge, always updating and renewing information, as well as not following others blindly.

Osama says that knowledge has an honoured place in Islam. Knowledge is not only about Islam, but also includes everything that gives benefit.

In addition, the most important thing is not to follow others blindly in order to be effective in reporting.

Be precise when writing your article and be honest as it's your job to tell people the things going on around the world they live in. Many do not realise that the job of a journalist is actually similar to that of preaching, that is, telling the truth.

The concept of communication is part of the Islamic teaching, covering the relationship between slave ('Abdu) and his Creator (Allah), the relationship between humans, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, as well as the relationship with nature.

Even though a journalist has efficient skills to obtain information for news writing, he is still considered not qualified if he or she fails to filter and find information that is based on the truth.

As a Muslim journalist, one should avoid writing news for the sake of profit and popularity, ignoring the ethics in the profession in terms of presence of news and also the Islamic rules that we have to obey, especially *amanah* (trust) which is being responsible in everything we do.

Nadiah Mohd Kamil,
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