

Malaysia Weighs Releasing 9/11-Linked Terrorist from Prison

OE Watch Commentary: In December 2001, Malaysian militant Yazid Sufaat was arrested for his alleged involvement with al-Qaeda and links to the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States. A former biochemistry student in the US, he was tasked with developing anthrax as a bio-terror weapon for al-Qaeda and was an explosives expert for Southeast Asia-based Jemaa Islamiya, a group responsible for a series of large attacks in Indonesia. According to the first excerpted article in the Malaysian *Berita Haria* [Daily News], Malaysia is now facing the prospect of Sufaat being released from prison. However, the government is examining whether his detention should be extended and whether his release will foment terrorism in the country.

According to the article, Malaysia has a Terrorism Prevention Board, which will be reviewing Sufaat's case and deciding whether he may be released. It will need to determine whether he is fully recovered and deradicalized. Given the difficulty of this type of examination, the article notes the Board recognizes the evaluation will need to be thorough. If Sufaat no longer holds his previous views and is no longer a threat to the public, according to Malaysia's former chief of police, "there is nothing immoral about releasing Sufaat."

The article also demonstrates that this case is unique insofar as the Terrorism Prevention Act under which Sufaat has been detained was previously used to detain Communists in the country, but only until even Communists recanted their ideology. Now the same Act is being used in a new era and the Sufaat case is the first major test. Before concluding the article, it also lists Sufaat's experience, including his service in the Malaysian Armed Forces.

Perhaps most relevant, however, is that he was released once before, and then recruited for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This may raise questions about whether he will recant his ideology this time if he did not the last time. The second accompanying passage provides further details on his background, links to the September 11 attacks, and previous arrests. It notes that "Yazid, a US trained bio-chemist, was detained... in December 2001 for his alleged involvement with bin Laden's al-Qaeda. He was released in 2008 but re-arrested five years later and again in 2017 after a brief release. Yazid was arrested in 2013... for recruiting new members for the Islamic State. Following his release, Yazid was detained in December 2017 after authorities discovered that he had been recruiting fellow inmates for al-Qaeda while in jail." **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Malaysian UNGERIN anti-terror-police on 23 May 2009, at the Muar in Johore, Malaysia.
Source: Rizuan via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marine_UNGERIN021.jpg, CC BY-SA 3.0

“For me, it is not wrong to give him a chance if he is fully recovered, but the examination of Yazid [Sufaat] must be done very carefully.”



Continued: Malaysia Weighs Releasing 9/11-Linked Terrorist from Prison

Source: “Apakah Yazid Sufaat Sudah Benar-Benar Pulih (Has Yazid Benefit Really Recovered?),” *Berita Harian*, 20 October 2019. <https://www.bhplus.com.my/berita/kes/2019/10/619767/apakah-yazid-sufaat-sudah-benar-benar-pulih>

A local militant, Yazid Sufaat, must prove he no longer supports the terrorist ideology before a decision is made to release him next month. If there is still a threat to the country and the public, then his release will need to be re-evaluated by the Terrorism Prevention Board. Regarding that, former Chief of Police, Tan Sri Musa Hassan, said “The board will need to conduct a thorough review and evaluation before deciding whether to release or extend Yazid’s detention. “For me, it is not wrong to give him a chance if he is fully recovered, but the examination of Yazid must be done very carefully,” he said. When it comes to issues of ideology, Musa explains, the important thing to know is whether Yazid is willing to change something about his past or is he still trying to perpetuate elements of violence within himself. If he is fully aware and recovered, it is not wrong for the government to release him because it concerns the rights of every individual in our country. In the past, Communist detainees under the Internal Security Act were also released after they were fully recovered, he said.

Source: Ali Nufael, “Police: Malaysian Terrorist Linked to 9/11 Attacks is Set to be Freed Next Month,” *Benar News*, 23 October 2019. <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/malaysian/sentence-done-10232019163232.html>

Yazid Sufaat, the only Malaysian directly involved in the 9/11 terror attacks against the United States, is set to be released from prison next month, but police will continue to monitor him, the nation’s police chief says.

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Yazid, a U.S. trained bio-chemist, was detained under the now-defunct Internal Security Act (ISA) in December 2001 for his alleged involvement with bin Laden’s al-Qaeda. He was released in 2008 but re-arrested five years later and again in 2017 after a brief release.

Yazid was arrested in 2013 under SOSMA [the Security Offenses (Special Measures) Act] and sentenced to four years for recruiting new members for the Islamic State.

Following his release, Yazid was detained in December 2017 after authorities discovered that he had been recruiting fellow inmates for al-Qaeda while in jail. He is finishing up his two-year sentence and is to be released, according to officials.

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A bio-chemistry graduate from the University of Sacramento in California, Yazid joined Jemaah Islamiyah terror group shortly after its founding in 1993. He was tasked with developing anthrax as a bio-terror weapon for al-Qaeda, investigators said.

In January 2000 key al-Qaeda members met at Yazid’s home in Kuala Lumpur to discuss terror plans, according to reports. He also allegedly provided lodging to two Sept. 11 hijackers, Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi.

Yazid was flown to Kandahar, Afghanistan, in 2001 under the command of Ayman al-Zawahiri to spend several months attempting to cultivate anthrax in a laboratory he helped set up near the Kandahar airport, according to the 9/11 commission report.

He was in Afghanistan during the Sept. 11 attack and later fled through Pakistan to Malaysia where he was caught by authorities and jailed under ISA at the Kamunting Camp prison, which housed convicted terrorists and political detainees.

Home Minister Muhyiddin Yassin told reporters the government would wait for the Prevention of Terrorism Board to decide Yazid’s fate.

Muhyiddin said the board would meet next month to examine details of Yazid’s detention.

“I have not come to the final decision, I just reviewed the matter and the two-year detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) is likely to end soon,” Muhyiddin said, according to state news agency Bernama.

“Regardless, there is a procedure before the final decision is made through a single board where it will look at circumstances during the detention period and how he (Yazid) has behaved, whether he has improved or not,” he said. “This will be looked at and then the decision will be made.”