

Talk by controversial imam at UMS cancelled

The Star 23.12.2015

KOTA KINABALU: A talk for youths by controversial Canadian imam Dr Bilal Philips at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) today has been cancelled.

In a statement issued yesterday, UMS did not give a reason for the last-minute cancellation of the talk, entitled "The Muslim Youth – From Darkness to Light".

It was jointly organised by the university and the privately-owned Sidma College. Dr Bilal has been described by authorities in several countries as a security threat.

The 68-year-old, who is chancellor of the Islamic Online University, has been a controversial figure, particularly in the West, for his extremist views.

Earlier, a UMS spokesman said they had obtained the necessary approvals from the state religious authorities for Dr Bilal to give his talk.

Foreign news reports said Dr Bilal had been barred or asked to leave several countries, including Australia, Britain, Germany, Kenya and Bangladesh, for alleged links to radical extremist groups over the past few years.

In September this year, he was deported from the Philippines ahead of a scheduled talk in Manila, which had alleged that he had links to extremist groups in the southern Philippines.

Dr Bilal, who converted to Islam in 1972, has repeatedly denied in many interviews that he was promoting extremist views.

In an interview with the Canada's *The Globe and Mail* earlier this year, he was quoted as saying that Muslims in the West should shun violent jihad.

He also said the Islamic State's self-declared caliphate in Syria and Iraq was bogus.