

PAS hypocritical on 'bin Abdullah'
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Are the leaders and members of PAS so overcome with prejudice against Perlis mufti Dr Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin that they have become hypocritical of the mufti's recent statement regarding the use of 'bin Abdullah' for new Muslim converts?

Dr Asri announced last week that non-Muslim converts who embrace Islam could retain their family name and need not attach 'bin/binti Abdullah' at the end, as is commonly, and mistakenly, being practised now.

I did not read the official edict but from press reports, I understand that they 'could' use the family name they choose and 'need not' change it to Abdullah. But an online Harakahdaily report dated March 15 claims that the Fatwa Council "mengharamkan penggunaan bin Abdullah" (forbid the use of 'bin Abdullah').

Journalistic slant aside, according to the same report Perlis PAS leaders seemed rather critical of the good mufti's move. One said that the mufti should focus more on steps to make conversion to Islam easier for non-Muslims. Isn't retaining one's family name would make it easier, not to mention more proper, for newly-converted Muslims? He also said that the use of 'bin Abdullah' has been accepted by Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Of course, Muslims prefer their new 'brothers and sisters' to adopt a familiar Islamic surname, and non-Muslims would not be overly concerned what their betraying kins call themselves. But what about the converts themselves? The ones I know who have accepted 'bin/binti Abdullah' had done so because they thought their faith would not be complete without doing so, having been misled to believing so by ignorant ustazs (religious teachers).

And many newly converted Muslims I know, especially Europeans, refuse to use Abdullah as they are proud of their family name. They have changed their religion, not their family.

Apart from leaders, PAS members too have voiced out harsh criticisms against Dr Asri's move. What makes these criticisms seem hypocritical is that they fully support their Mursyidul Am Nik Aziz Nik Mat's similar stand with Dr Asri's regarding this issue all these years. Even party president Abdul Hadi Awang had given a similar advice to one of the party's Chinese convert not to change his surname.

All and sundry lauded it as a good move by their party guru's to educate new converts that surnames and family names should not be changed. But when the same sentiment is propagated by someone they have blacklisted for many reasons, they opposed it. And they talk of an Islamic state.

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