

Open letter to Marina Mahathir's take on Bersih 2.0
Malaysiakini.com
July 20, 2011

Dear Datuk Marina Mahathir,

I hope you get to read this email, written in response to your Malaysiakini article published on 18 July 2011.

I would have written to Malaysiakini but I am not a subscriber to the online news portal because of my principled objection to its blatantly one-sided coverage of news and views.

Comments by Datuk Marina Mahathir in Malaysiakini (in bold), followed by my response.

The Malaysian government feels threatened, is in a total state of panic and cannot think clearly, former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad's eldest daughter Marina Mahathir says.

"They do feel threatened because they underestimated Bersih in 2007 and then in the 2008 s general election, they lost a lot of seats in Parliament and the state assemblies.

"And since then, they have been in a state of total panic and they can't think clearly at all. Now they are obsessed about how to win them back."

That my dear is your opinion and the opinion of those you speak to. But try speaking also to the silent majority, and you'll be enlightened.

The vast majority of Malaysians are not readers of news portals that only give one-sided versions of the truth.

The government that you described as being "in a state of total panic" and which "can't think clearly" is the same government that has been running this country, quite well thank you, since March 2008.

By the comments of some who were responding to wild allegations made by those who took part in Bersih 2.0 including yours, you come to the unsubstantiated conclusion that the Government can't think straight.

This is the same government that also kept the streets of Kuala Lumpur safe for the likes of you and for the rest of us. The rest of us are law-abiding citizens who stayed away from an outright illegal march.

If this government, through the police, had not acted firmly it would have been guilty of reneging on its bounden duty to protect its citizens from lawbreakers and miscreants out to create mischief and disorder for their own ends.

Just because you have been blind to the machinations of those backing the illegal march, both local and foreigners, it does not mean the government has to pander to your misguided adventures.

"Government in panic" ? that's what happened in Tian An Mein Square in 1989. They panicked and killed many.

Here the government ignored them largely but made sure the police kept the two groups apart.

This was a headless serpent, a spent force before it began. Hissing all the way to the sound of tear gas fizzling out at the end with nothing concrete to show for it.

Government business continues regardless. DS Najib Razak goes off to Europe to meet with amongst others the Pontiff.

No incidents anywhere except for the solicited pieces penned by non diplomatic staff attached to the UN and its many subsidiaries at the insistence of their mates within Malaysia. Nothing of any significance there too.

"You can win back people just by being nice. You can't win back people by being nasty. You can't say that those people who marched are hooligans. Maybe there was a handful, not all of them.

Grow up, Datuk. It is easy to be nice. Just give in to every demand of every person, no matter what the cause or what the means. But this government chose not to take the populist view.

It decided, and I say rightly, to take the more responsible stance. You admit that a handful were indeed hooligans.

That handful is sufficient justification for the police to act the way it did, which, in this case, was extremely disciplined and professional, under severe provocation.

And you say the majority of those who marched were not hooligans. I am sorry Datuk, but in my books, anyone who breaks the law is a hooligan. That includes you.

"The majority of them were professionals. The group was so diverse and it was really one Malaysia - young, rich, poor of every race, creed and every religion," she told Malaysiakini in an exclusive interview.

Hullo, you say the majority were professionals. My dear, 'professionals' are people who belong to a recognised profession. Hooligans are those who break the law. The two are not mutually exclusive.

If you combined the two, then you have professional streetwalkers.

From what I saw on the various television channels, I do not agree that there were significant numbers of 'young, rich, poor of every race, creed and religion'. Perhaps you should review the video tapes.

Instead that the vast majority of Malaysians who opposed the illegal assembly and lawlessness were 'young, rich, poor of every race, creed and religion' and residing in the length and breadth of our beloved nation.

On July 9, Marina took part in the Bersih 2.0 protest, with her daughter and friends.

They started from near Jalan Pudu (Berjaya Times Square) and walked along Jalan Hang Jebat (formerly Davidson Road) in front of Stadium Negara towards the Olympics Council of Malaysia building, where she encountered other friends.

She added that the people who marched were proud of the Bersih 2.0 movement. "I may not agree with your cause but you did a really good thing. We all became One Malaysia.

"Now, they are labelling us all sorts of names and let me tell you that they have lost all these votes. They may think they have lost them anyway, but let me tell you that there were a lot of people sitting on the fence and they have definitely gone to the other side. I see this clearly in the social media, especially email, on Twitter and in the blogs."

Please also talk to the hundreds of thousands, not just the handful you spoke to, about what they felt.

They wanted the authorities to be firm with law breakers. Go ahead, talk to the taxi drivers, the shopkeepers who had to close their shops, the thousands of Kuala Lumpur residents who were forced to stay at home on 9 July, to the tourists who had to be sent away to safer zones, to the policemen who had their leave cancelled.

I don't believe you can be so naïve as to think that this nation is run by the collective wisdom of miscreants who subscribe to the social media you subscribe to.

Please read the many comments by those who were opposed to the march, which was sheep in wolf's clothing.

Marina explained that the July 9 march had dented the image of the government and would obviously affect the ruling party "from the all the stupid statements that they are making and have been made by the government officials".

She added: "Imagine saying that the police fired into the Tung Shin Hospital to protect the patients. It does not make sense. Again, they cannot think clearly and it is having an effect on the government.

Is that all that you have been reading? Havent you read any other version of what happened at Tung Shin hospital? Please get out of your cocoon and join the rest of us in the real world.

"The prime minister came to give a briefing to 6,000 people the following day after July 9. If you are constantly surrounded by people who are telling you that you are wonderful and you are right, you are not going to get a true picture of what happened. You have to go and talk to people with different, not mutual views.

And you got the true picture because you spoke to your daughter and friends in Jalan Pudu and near Stadium Merdeka? Dear Datuk, there is whole world, more mature than you, out there. Go talk to them as well.

"If they refuse to listen to the people, the government leaders are going to be cocooned in complacency. And they are going to react in absolutely the wrong way."

Who is 'the people,'? 10,000 of you who took the law into your own hands, or the millions who didnt?

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