

Najib must admit Somalia trip was reckless
Malaysiakini.com
September 5,2011

We all understand that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is thinking about the reputation of his party, Umno, even as the wife and family members of BernamaTV cameraman Noramfaizul Mohd Nor grieve over his death.

At a press conference yesterday morning, Najib rebuked those who were trying to pin the blame for Noramfaizul's death on Umno Youth and Putra 1Malaysia.

The premier must understand that no one is playing a blame game. But Umno division chief Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim, Putra 1Malaysia and national news agency Bernama must be held responsible for not providing Noramfaizul (left) with adequate protection and training.

The media workers from Malaysia had no bulletproof vest or headgear, and the four-wheel drive vehicle they were travelling in was not marked "Media" to prevent sniper attacks.

Najib has gone on record to say that one could get killed even if one wears a bulletproof vest. He also dodged questions about whether journalists assigned to conflict zones must be given adequate training, saying such assignments come with its inherent risks.

But his most irresponsible remark is this - "If you are not prepared to take the risk, then stay at home."

I am shocked.

Journalists do not have to go to conflict zones to bring back news reports and footage. But some opt to do so to tell the truth and disseminate accurate information to the people. This is an honourable job.

As such, it is the duty of the media organisations to adequately train and protect their journalists.

Noramfaizul has been described by Najib as a national hero. Let's try telling that to his wife, two young children and parents.

The truth is that he died because of a reckless trip put together by Putra 1Malaysia and Abdul Azeez, with the backing of the government and Bernama.

It was nothing but a cheap publicity stunt for Umno and Putra 1Malaysia when the aid could have been disbursed through existing aid agencies such as Medecins San Frontieres (MSF).

The government has to stop repeating what it does best - sweeping pertinent issues under the carpet.

Najib must admit that a gross mistake has been made by Putra 1Malaysia and Bernama.

Following that, the Ministry of Information must impose safety protocol requirements on media organisations in order to protect reporters going to hostile areas.

This is because no story is worth dying for.

I call upon the government to institute an investigation into the level of preparedness of this poorly planned and reckless mission to Somalia.

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