

Scholar: Not haram to topple unjust Muslim gov't

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Is it forbidden in Islam (haram) for Muslims to support groups that intend to oust a Muslim country's government as claimed in an Utusan Malaysia report?

On the contrary, said one of the world's most influential Islamic scholar and thinkers, adding it is only right that Muslims resist an authority that is unjust.

The outspoken professor Tariq Ramadan - who lectures Contemporary Islamic Studies in Oxford University - said that it is right for Muslims to be constructively critical of their governments.

"We have to resist injustice. The Prophet has said that the best jihad is to take a world of truth and place it in front of a tyrant," he told Malaysiakini when met in Penang yesterday.

Tariq was responding to Masjidil Haram fatwa council member Sulaiman Saloomi who reportedly said that it was haram in Islam to topple Muslim governments, especially if the replacement brought greater danger to society.

Umno-owned Malay language daily Utusan Malaysia in its regular dose of Pakatan Rakyat bashing had quoted Sulaiman as saying that demonstrations are forbidden even if the leadership has gone against Islamic teachings.

The cleric's solution was that the errant leader should be advised instead, according to the Umno-owned daily.

Cleric siding with the powerful

Tariq however completely disagreed with the remark, saying that Sulaiman's authority was incorrect.

When asked if demonstrations are forbidden in Islam, Tariq replied that the cleric was speaking only for those in power.

"We have to resist based on principles of justice.

"There must be elections. When the leaders are not elected..," said Tariq, who presented a two hour lecture organised by the Penang Islamic Foundation in Penang yesterday.

"It is right for Muslims to resist any unjust power by non-violent means. We can remove unjust leaders like what happened in the Middle East. It was the right thing to do," he added.

He also criticised Sulaiman's claim, while speaking in Kuala Terengganu, citing Prophet Muhammad that anyone who tries to disrupt the affairs of the ummah (Muslim community) while they are united, should be killed.

Tariq, who was on a two day speaking tour in Penang, replied that it was wrong to say this, as it is not based on the correct Islamic principles.

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