

I am not a religious bigot

MalaysiaKini.com

July 24, 2013

By Abdul Rahman Dahlan

MP SPEAKS Recently, several quarters have raised their concerns on the allegations that I support the burning of Bibles. Much of these concerns were unfortunately based on unfounded allegation based on rumours and unverifiable third party accounts made worse by constant spinning of the alternative media.

During a press conference on July 18, 2013, I was asked by a Malaysiakini reporter whether Perkasa chief Ibrahim Ali should also be prosecuted for his alleged urging to burn Bibles.

NONEI explained to the reporter that I was upset when I first learned of the alleged urging by Ibrahim Ali to burn Bibles. I wanted an explanation of the situation from Ibrahim Ali, as many of my constituents had expressed to me of their dissatisfaction towards Ibrahim Ali for making such a controversial statement.

As evident in the transcript of the press conference, I never expressed my support to any urging of burning Bibles by anyone, nor did I instigate Muslims to confiscate bibles from fellow Christian Malaysians and burn them in anger.

Let me be very clear, I am not a religious bigot.

Those who know me personally as an individual and a politician, and know the work I've done as an MP would readily attest to that.

I was brought up in an environment where my parents taught me to respect other religions and I have carried this advice dearly throughout my career as a politician.

Despite the many polarising controversial issues on religious discourse, which have cropped up in the past few years, I try my best to stay true to my conviction of being fair, honest and frank.

DAP takes everything out of context

First, I acknowledge this is one of the most contentious issues among Muslims and Christians alike. Therefore I support the 10-point solution mooted by the prime minister in 2011. I have made that very clear on my campaign trail in the recently concluded 13th general election.

Second, I never touched the controversial usage of 'Allah' in any of my parliamentary debates, as I knew it would inflame further the already over-strung relationship between Muslims and Christians in the country. I would rather allow this issue be settled without political one-upmanships.

Third, I spend one third of my parliamentary annual allocation in the Christian-dominated state assembly of Kadamaian where the allocation goes into upgrading churches and funding Christian religious events.

And finally, as an MP, I have not only assisted in sending Muslim pilgrims for the haj in Mecca, but I have also supported efforts to send Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem.

How can I be construed as a religious bigot, when 45 percent of my constituents in Kota Belud are Christians?

My question is then, must DAP leaders take everything out of context and insinuate that I am a religious bigot when in reality nothing of that sort was actually intended in the press conference last Thursday?

Once again, let me reiterate, at no point in the press conference did I raise the issue of burning of Bibles except when I was quoting Ibrahim Ali's reply to me.

To further clarify the controversy, I have attached the original unedited transcript of the press conference session below.

To any party still bent on accusing me of calling for Bible burning, I will not hesitate to take legal action against them. This issue is far too serious to be treated as just another political strategy by the opposition. It is downright dangerous and explosive.

Transcript of press conference

The press conference began with my briefing on the Ops-Raya and Anti-Litter campaign by Jabatan Bomba dan Penyelamat Malaysia and Jabatan Pengurusan Sisa Pepejal Negara, both under the purview of my ministry.

After all questions posed to my ministry were answered, I opened the floor to any other questions from the press. This was when the reporter from Malaysiakini, Ahmad Fadli KC, asked me a few questions.

The full transcript of my conversation with the Malaysiakini reporter is presented in

verbatim below:

Malaysiakini: Merujuk kepada pasangan blogger sex yang menghina Islam ni, ada sebahagian masyarakat mempertikai kenapa personaliti lain yang juga kelihatan seperti mempersenda agama lain dan menghina agama lain tidak diambil tindakan. So what is your take on this whole issue?

Abdul Rahman: Yang statement mana yang menghina agama? Seperti mana?

Malaysiakini: Saya kira sebahagian masyarakat mempertikai kenapa Datuk Ibrahim Ali...

Abdul Rahman: What did he say? What did Ibrahim Ali say?

Malaysiakini: Tentang sebelum ini gesaan beliau untuk membakar Bible...

Abdul Rahman: Are you sure? Are you sure Ibrahim Ali said that?

Malaysiakini: Well... It's reported...

Abdul Rahman: It is reported... Well, I was... Do you want me to say this in English? You are from where?

Malaysiakini: Malaysiakini.

Abdul Rahman: You want this in English or Malay?

Malaysiakini: It's up to you, Dato'.

Abdul Rahman: Okay. Insiden ini begini... Pada saya, sebenarnya... pasangan Alvin (Tan) dan Vivian (Lee) ini bukan ini saja video ataupun gambar yang offensive. Kalau kita tengok dalam Facebook dan juga channel YouTube mereka... banyak lagi perkara-perkara yang ditonjolkan oleh pasangan ini yang betul-betul melanggar tatasusila dan adat resam kebanyakan rakyat Malaysia.

This is not about your right, this is about maintaining harmoni kehidupan kita. Dan fakta bahawa mereka telah meminta maaf itu menunjukkan mereka telah mengakui mereka membuat kesilapan yang besar.

Negara kita ini, yang saya khawatirkan ialah apabila kita tidak mengambil tindakan-tindakan tertentu, ianya akan melibatkan pergeseran agama.

Dalam sejarah manusia ini, pergeseran agamalah yang paling susah (untuk) kita

selesaikan apabila ianya bermula.

NONE Amat penting untuk kita melihat ini sebagai pengajaran kepada kita. Dan (dalam kes) Alvin dan Vivian (left) ini, konteksnya jauh lebih besar, bukan saja di sini tapi di Singapura dahulu.

Dan kalau kita tengok channel YouTubanya, dia hanya pakai pakaian yang betul-betul menjolok mata... menggunakan perkataan-perkataan yang betul-betul terlalu lucah dan ini adalah sebahagian daripada reaksi rakyat kepada pasangan ini.

Dan saya setuju kejadian seperti ini tidak boleh diulangi dan pihak berkuasa mesti mengambil tindakan yang cepat untuk menangani isu ini.

Berkenaan dengan Ibrahim Ali, soal tentang contohnya membakar kitab...

I interviewed Ibrahim Ali. I was very upset juga sebab saya mewakili ramai pengundi yang bukan Islam di kawasan saya. Dan mereka memberitahu kepada saya kenyataan Ibrahim Ali itu tidak betul.

Perkasa president Ibrahim Ali Tetapi apabila saya bertanya kepada Ibrahim Ali (right), apa yang berlaku pada waktu itu ialah ada kitab al-Quran yang mungkin tersalah cetak dan tersalah tulis diedarkan ataupun yang tidak betul ditulis dan diedarkan di sekolah-sekolah.

Saya difahamkan jawapan beliau ialah cara untuk melupuskan kitab suci al-Quran yang dianggap salah tafsiran, salah huruf, salah menulis ialah dengan membakar kitab (tersebut)... Ataupun kitab injil, kitab-kitab suci ini... ada cara di dalam agama Islam untuk melupuskan kitab-kitab suci termasuk kitab Bible.

Dan membakarnya itu... menjadikannya abu dan ditebarkan di air adalah sebahagian daripada cara untuk kita melupuskan kitab-kitab suci yang kita mungkin terasa tersalah taip, tersalah tulisan.

Other than that, you throw it in the garbage! Which one is more humane (berperikemanusiaan)? Which one is more respectful? Itu yang Ibrahim Ali kata.

Tetapi seperti biasa, portal-portal tertentu pusing dan mengatakan itu adalah kenyataan untuk membakar kitab injil. It's not right...

In our religion, there is a respectful way of disposing of sacred books. You have a choice (either) throw it in the dustbin and it goes into the dumpsite (landfill) or you burn it, kumpulkan ashes nya, simpan dalam plastic and then we go in the middle

of the sea, recite some special doa, and then you buang di dalam air. You see, it's a big difference you know.

But of course, some portal would like to turn it the other way around. Okay? All right. Thank you.

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