

## **Losing the best people in PKR**

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COMMENT If Abdul Khalid Ibrahim is a good man, why has there not been a single leader in his party who has stood up for him?

This is a reasonable question, given that in these last few months, literally not a single PKR top leader has come out to say: I support Khalid.

There are two very obvious potential scenarios that explain this state of affairs.

The first, propagated by the likes of Rafizi Ramli (left), is that Khalid is in fact corrupt, and all PKR leaders realise this truth.

If this is true, we would be hard pressed to explain why Khalid did not take what were literally hundreds of opportunities to abuse his position of power and enrich himself in his six years as menteri besar.

If anyone thinks it is difficult to make five or ten-fold of RM 70 million within six years as menteri besar of the richest state in Malaysia, one only need ask Dr Khir Toyo for some pointers.

The second explanation as to why Khalid has no political allies within PKR is simply because there is no 'benefit' or 'reward' in supporting Khalid.

No contracts for backing Khalid

You could suck up to Khalid from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same, and not only will you not be rewarded with positions or contracts, you are likely to end up in his bad books.

This is the exact opposite of the spirit of feudalism that it is increasingly clear pervades PKR.

Politicians have prevailed on Khalid again and again to loosen Selangor's purse strings, and to oil the wheels of Pakatan Rakyat's political machinery. Khalid has again and again said no, this money belongs to the people of Selangor, not to any political interests.

For a while, some of the slightly better politicians praised Khalid for taking this stance. However, a much bigger group started saying: "Very action lah! Think you'll be there forever? Let's just see how long you can stay in power like that."

It turns out the latter group has long overpowered the few in the former.

## Integrity deficit in PKR leadership

If I am correct in thinking of Khalid as a man of integrity, then you can imagine my sad disappointment at how so many people in the party I have known personally for such a long time abandoned him to the wolves.

Not a single one of his former supporters, or those who would sing his praises, stood by him when push came to shove.

From the perspective of democratic representation, we note also that despite over a third of PKR's members voting for Khalid in the second to last vote count, not a single leader has taken up his cause.

Again, his detractors will say the fault for this lies with Khalid himself, but for whatever little my opinion is worth, I think this reveals more about those who did not stand up for Khalid than it does about Khalid himself.

Does politics invariably corrupt?

There are some people who feel that politics invariably corrupts. Being allergic to cynicism, I have never chosen to agree with the 'invariably' part of that sentence, but at this point I am certainly comfortable with replacing it with 'often' or even 'almost always'.

Malaysian politics feels like acid that eats away at personal integrity. PKR used to be home to so many individuals I looked up to - individuals of integrity that I felt fought bravely and intelligently for Malaysians, and for a Malaysia free from corruption.

Now, it feels like never-ending shades of grey have eliminated even the most basic sense of black and white in these same individuals. The Selangor crisis has clearly smashed what little was left of PKR's moral compass, causing its ship to drift well into Barisan Nasional's waters of corruption and self-centered politics.

The situation seems no better with DAP and the Erdogan faction of PAS. If my evaluation of the entire Kajang Move is correct, then they are as complicit and responsible as anyone in PKR.

Khalid losing his position as menteri besar is probably not the worst thing to emerge from this crisis. The worst is that in its pursuit of misguided objectives, PKR and Pakatan have lost their best, strongest feature - the integrity of their leaders.

'Friend and family member'

Some will cry realpolitik and make accusations of both naivette as well as a blind obsession with Khalid. I do not begrudge them their view. We must all reflect on our positions and then live with them.

I joined PKR in 2007, just before the Ijok by-election that Khalid lost. PKR was a one seat party then, with Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail standing alone in a Parliament dominated by dark blue.

I left the party in January 2014. This time, it is now Khalid who is alone. I am proud to have believed in the underdog in 2007, and no less proud to do the same in 2014.

Anwar Ibrahim's exhortation not to resort to personal attacks against his 'friend and family member' Khalid was not wrong, but one cannot help but feel that it rings hollow, given how the vicious campaign against Khalid would have been impossible without Anwar's go ahead.

Broken bonds

Nurul Izzah Anwar made one of her first public comments about the menteri besar issue, throwing her support behind her mother Wan Azizah, quoting Wan Azizah's strength during Anwar's imprisonment as qualification for the menteri besar post.

I cannot help but recall another story Nurul Izzah used to tell. I heard it once in person at a Selangor buka puasa event some years ago, and I believe it is a story she often used to tell at events with Khalid.

Nurul Izzah spoke of how alone Anwar was, imprisoned in Sungai Buloh, with all his former friends and allies having completely abandoned him. No one who was part of the establishment would dare to visit him in prison for fear of the taint it would bring onto themselves.

No one but Khalid.

I remember Nurul Izzah describing with great feeling and eloquence how, despite having everything to lose, Khalid stuck to his principles, and stood by Anwar and his family in their darkest hour.

Fifteen years later, Khalid is still sticking to his principles. This time, though, he appears to be standing alone.