

Israeli diplomats' visit exposes Najib's hypocrisy
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COMMENT | Foreign Minister Anifah Aman insists that as a host country to the recent World Urban Forum (WUF) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia was bound by the terms of the conditions, as prescribed by the United Nations, to allow the six-member Israeli delegation to come into the country. The issue is not so much the obligation of Malaysia as a host, as it is the nature of Israel itself, however.

It was not too long ago, on Jan 12, 2009, when a special parliamentary sitting was convened to refer to Israel as a "serial terrorist state." Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak was a deputy prime minister then, and all records showed that the words were his.

If Najib had felt so strongly then, was it not apt to question the Israeli delegation right in the heart of Malaysia's capital if the country was serious about making urban spaces habitable for people of all faith(s)? The Israeli delegation would have been impelled to reply in front of 25,000 international delegates.

Yet, such an opportunity was missed. Instead, Anifah averred that the World Urban Forum was a "successful event." Does Najib, indeed, Anifah, did not know that the administration of Trump had changed the "facts on the ground" by passing Jerusalem to the hands of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu?

Indeed, they did. Just a few weeks ago, together with PAS president Hadi Awang, both had pledged to impose punitive measures on the US for its irresponsible handling of the Palestinian issue. Yet, the World Urban Forum, was allowed to proceed with nary a protest on how Palestinians have been pushed out of the process by the Israeli completely.

To be sure, there was a time, in the mid-1980s, when Malaysians of all stripes, would protest against the visit of President Chaim Herzog of Israel to Singapore.

Whither solidarity?

What happened to that spirit of solidarity with the Palestinians?

While the late Lee Kuan Yew allowed Herzog's visit to go forward in 1986, the vehemence of the protests showed the seriousness by which then prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad was against the Israeli oppression of the Palestinians. Even when the visit was in Singapore, Mahathir had shown the temerity to protest against it.

Yes, at one time Mahathir and his cabinet allowed the Israeli cricket team in for the International Cricket Tournament held in March 1997, which invited huge protests amongst Malaysians, despite it being a sporting tournament that does not involve any Israeli diplomats – more so senior delegates, like those who attended the WUF.

If the angst of the Malaysian people was even for a sports programme involving Israelis, what more an official event like WUF? For the record, the writer certainly disagree with the Israeli presence in Malaysia for sporting or diplomatic reasons.

Yet when that Israeli delegation was in Malaysia, no pressure was put on behalf of the Palestinians on why the Zionist regime had, to this day, continued to prosecute against the people? What then is the use of Malaysia's anti-Israeli rhetoric against Israel's apartheid policy?

Thus, the issue of having to concede to the United Nations that Malaysia is obliged to host the Israeli delegation flies in the face of diplomatic norm and logic.

If Aung San Suu Kyi (*photo*) had led the Myanmar delegation to the World Urban Forum, would Najib, Anifah and Hadi too bow silently to her presence? The question is not posed in vain, granted that she is now generally blamed as one of the key culprits of the massacre of the Rohingya Muslims. Yet, the policy of Israel to segregate and prosecute the Palestinians has been known since 1948.

Indeed, more walls and lines of demarcation that separate the Arab population from Israeli citizens have been put in place by the regime of Netanyahu, as is the expansion of illegal Israeli human settlement in occupied Palestinian lands too.

All of these aberrations and atrocities are against the UN Geneva Convention and numerous UN resolutions, of which Malaysia is a signatory to. Why isn't Malaysia calling upon these UN treaty obligations as well?

Thus, it is not without some bewilderment, and outrage, that the Israeli delegation was allowed to attend the event. Was Malaysia, more precisely Najib and his ally in PAS, turning back on their support of the Palestinians?

Standing as one

The Prophet Muhammad used to say that the Muslim community is but one. When the right thigh is pinched, the left thigh of other Muslims would feel the equal measure of the pain.

It is in this sense that Malaysia has always supported the cause of the Palestinians, be they governed by Palestinian Liberation Front or Hamas. Either way, Malaysia knows that the two entities are attempting their level best to crystallise the "two state solution," that has been acknowledged by the world over as the right course of action to attain permanent peace.

Indeed, records from the archives of Wisma Putra would show that Malaysia has been supportive of PLO since 1969. Such support has been extended to PLO in various international platforms, including the United Nations, Asean and other bodies of which Malaysia is a member.

But, the fact is plainly this: when Malaysia calls Israel the "serial terrorist state," it is incumbent upon the government of Najib to exert permanent pressure on Tel Aviv to make the two state solution a closer reality.

Najib cannot tar Israel with a negative label, only to allow all incoming Israeli visits to Malaysia, of which Malaysia has no diplomatic relationship, to operate freely. It also means joining with other European countries to sanction and ban any businesses with Israel.

Yet, while Najib appears to reject Israel, neither he nor Hadi had anything damning to say about the Israeli delegation to Malaysia. More importantly, when they were here, they were not confined to a single area of activity, but allowed to roam around freely.

How can Israelis be allowed the full flush of the freedom in Malaysia when Palestinian back in the occupied territories of Israel are not even given the most basic human decency and rights?

To be sure, Najib and Anifah have both erred badly, which is why they are leaning on the terms of the invitation of the UN as the fig leaf of their defence.

While they saw it fit to criticise the meeting between European Union ambassadors and members of Pakatan Harapan, Najib, Hadi and Anifah have gone totally silent on Israeli delegation. But what is good for the goose must be good for the gander.

On the Israeli issue, Najib, Anifah and Hadi have shown their double standards. If this is not organised hypocrisy, then what is it?

One must not forget that Malaysia was hardly held at gunpoint to have this WUF in Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia could have easily opted out as the host. Blaming UN for this blooper is an insult to the intelligence of Malaysians.

God save Malaysia.

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