

**Kulai principal proves argument
Malaysiakini.com
August 19, 2010**

Since the accusation that I supposedly 'hate Malays and Islam so much' is one that is highly damaging not to mention dangerous, my friends have decently rallied to my side.

The first was Sharifuddin A Latiff of the Hartal MSM blog who assured that the team (a media watchdog group) is firmly in my corner. Then bloggers Hussein Hamid (Steadyku47), S. Jamal Al-Idrus (myAsylum) and several Malay/Muslim names I'm not personally acquainted with, as well as others of various races – my deep appreciation to all.

Faisal Mustaffa wrote in his article Kes Helen Ang: Politik perkauman Perkasa-Umno amat berbahaya: "Many times when I meet her, Helen would be in a simple baju kurung ... she has a cheerful face, is soft-spoken and feminine".

NONEMy mode of dressing is not a story that can be fabricated overnight. It's a habit formed through many years and my colleagues from work, past and present, will readily testify to the truth of Faisal's description (Helen Ang as a reporter, seated far left).

It's obvious that just like MACC did not do their homework when they decided to foist the suicide theory on Teoh Beng Hock, neither did Perkasa and Ridhuan Tee do theirs when they decided to cast me as the bogeyman.

Their allegation that I'm 'so anti-Malay and anti-Islam' is stretching credulity. A baju kurung-wearing and soft-spoken writer waging a war of hate against the Malay race is about as far fetched as the theory that Beng Hock strangled himself before deciding to jump from the 14th floor window.

Police acting for whom?

Due to Perkasa and Ridhuan's malice, my friends have indeed been compelled to step forward and help clear the air. Steve Oh wrote a letter on Friday saying that "[Helen] is among the country's writing talents in the use of language, both in Bahasa Malaysia and English ..."

Meanwhile, Faisal recounted how he was one of the speakers at the annual bloggers forum in May last year alongside panellists Fathi Aris Omar (Malaysiakini chief editor), Fahri Azzat (Loyar Burok website administrator/activist) and A Kadir Jasin (former NSTP group editor). The session was conducted in Malay and I was the moderator.

perak state assembly police blockade and arrest of opposition mps and ngo reps 070509
13On May 17, 2009, blogger 'A Voice' (his blog, 'Another Brick in the Wall') wrote about the forum proceedings: 'Coincidentally I recognised her [Helen] as one of those picked up in Ipoh on May 7. As Kadir Jasin expressed [in] surprise, one would have not have guessed someone so polite and feminine can get picked up for wearing black.'

'A Voice' was referring to my arrest by police outside the Perak state secretariat building the day the Pakatan Rakyat state government was toppled (above). A polite and feminine Malaysian can run afoul of the law for the most mind-boggling of reasons – like wearing black (an illegal colour, is it?)

The bloggers' forum was not the first time I've done public speaking in Malay. There have

been other occasions of roundtables and NGO dialogues, and I've exceeded events in Malay too. Perhaps Ridhuan and Perkasa think that I acquired my fluency in Malay by talking to myself?

If this is not the case, then the logical conclusion is that my competency in the language comes from interaction with its native speakers. But going by the Ridhuan and Perkasa version though, I must have been spitting wrath every instance in the faces of those Malays that I'd conversed with.

Perkasa on warpath

I've been writing this column for five years now and in all this while never let on that I wear baju kurung more often than not, or that I speak Malay well. If I wanted to, I could easily have projected myself in the cloying 'United Colours of Benetton' image. But really, I don't care for the multiracial public posturing as put on by some paragons of political correctness.

Nonetheless after this reluctant revelation, the public can see it is hardly credible for Perkasa and Ridhuan to spin that I hate Malays. On the contrary, an intolerant, hateful ideology is being openly espoused by the Perkasa types and Ridhuan acolytes who lace their expressions with intimidation too.

At the same time, I wish that those who hurl the slur 'Islamophobe' so cavalierly would learn to counter opposing arguments with a semblance of reason and logic. Please don't turn to this sleight of hand as a weapon of first resort.

Scarcely more than a week ago, the Malay supremacists were livid because of what I wrote in my CPI article Enforcing NEP on minority religions.

The latest news is that Perkasa made yet another police report, this time against MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek. You have to wonder when the running amok by Perkasa will eventually run out of steam, or will the police stations run out of police report forms first?

Islamisation in national schools

To recap, I discussed the curb on non-Muslim religious societies in national schools, the removal of crosses and icons from the mission schools, the confiscation of crucifixes and other religions symbols worn by pupils, and why more than 90 percent of Chinese parents prefer to enrol their children in vernacular school.

And look what just happened in Kulai. We get a school principal who tells her Chinese students to return to China. Her remarks about penumpang echo the imagery propounded in Utusan Malaysia opinion-editorials.

Siti Inshah Mansor, according to the police report against her, told a school assembly that the prayer strings Indian students wear around their neck make them look like dogs, and only dogs would be tied this way.

The police report also said that in her previous school, she had ordered these prayer string bracelets worn around the wrist of Hindu students to be cut.

Yet the Education Ministry is treating the parents' complaints with complete nonchalance; its director-general brushed off the grave offence caused by the principal as a "misunderstanding".

A father R Thinakaran has said he would withdraw his daughter from the school if no action was taken against Siti Inshah.

Another parent responding to my CPI article left this comment on Aug 10: "I now fear my daughter might convert to Islam later after hearing about Islam every day if I leave her in kebangsaan school. I am going to move her to private school soon so [that] she will be spared this indoctrination."

Were my earlier concerns about the suppression of religious expression and the climate of bigotry in the national schools justified?

Looking at the Kulai episode and the slew of complaints against the woman – who bears the title of 'Hajah' no less – what would a reasonable person with a shred of conscience deduce?

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/140582>