

'Mahathir's posturings don't stand up to scrutiny'

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The poor form exhibited by former prime minister Dr Mahathir in his outburst against Suaram – accusing us of being “lackeys of foreigners and politicians” - needs to be exposed for its Kafkaesque distortion that is reminiscent of the White Paper on Operation Lalang and other Mahathirisms.

mahathir responses to suaram report 01Suaram's principled stands on human rights violations in Malaysia as well as the rest of the world are on record. Dr Mahathir (right) should first check his facts with the Special Branch before he speaks because they have the best record of such documents.

Our support of the struggles of the East Timorese, Burmese, Palestinians and other oppressed peoples in Latin America, Africa and Asia date from the formation of Suaram in 1989.

Suaram has been part of the demonstrations against US imperialism in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as US duplicity in Palestine. I don't recall Dr Mahathir personally taking part in these actions although PAS leaders have done that. Umno Youth leaders organised some of these protests against the US although they don't seem to have any principled positions on other struggles outside the Middle East.

Dr Mahathir knows his record on East Timor very well. While Suaram and other Malaysian NGOs were organising the last important peace conference before East Timor's independence, the Mahathir government tried to suppress this important initiative for peace and independence for East Timor.

suaram johor event 211108It was all because of the links between his government and that of the Indonesian government. And who sent the goons in to smash that peace conference? Who were the lackeys of foreigners then? And who went to jail for being victims of fascist violence?

Has Mahathir or Umno been more consistent than Suaram in defending the rights of the Burmese people against the suppression by their military junta? We could go on...Human rights defenders in Suaram have been defending anti-imperialist struggles around the world for years as opposed to Dr Mahathir's posturings.

Who are the lackeys?

Perhaps then Defence Minister Najib Razak's speech on “Malaysia-US Defence Cooperation: the Untold Story” at the US Heritage Foundation on May 3, 2002 should give us a truer picture of who the lackeys of foreigners are:

“For many years US and Malaysian forces have cooperated on a wide range of missions with virtually no fanfare or public acknowledgement. And in spite of its success, our bilateral defence relationship seems to be an all too well-kept secret...

"Historically, Malaysia has been a steady, reliable friend of the United States. Our multitude of common interests includes trade and investments on a sizeable scale and security

cooperation across a range of fronts...

"Over the years, some in the United States have misinterpreted some of (Dr Mahathir's) straight talk. Let me be clear: Strong friendships can withstand strong words. Malaysia and the United States have been close for decades. Our multi-faceted relationship will have its high and low points, but the core values our nations share endure..."

And who went cap-in-hand to the Iron Lady (Margaret Thatcher) in 1988 to sign the RM5 billion arms deal after all the posturing about "Buy British Last?" Did the "sensitive documents" on the BMF scandal in the hands of the British Foreign Office have anything to do with this volte face in Dr Mahathir's attitude toward the British government?

On the domestic front, Suaram has been scrupulously impartial on the performance of our local politicians. Every Human Rights Report since 1998 documents our assessment of the performance of local politicians and the political parties. Since 2008, we have criticised the state governments of Pakatan Rakyat just as we have criticised the Barisan Nasional whenever they have violated human rights or exhibited bad governance.

In other words, Suaram has always scrupulously fought for justice, equality, democracy and human rights in Malaysia. Can Dr Mahathir search his conscience and declare the same?

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