

**Public must not allow themselves to be spooked by Perkasa
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COMMENT On Aug 10, Perkasa made a police report against CPI columnist Ms Helen Ang, calling for her to be investigated under the Sedition Act or ISA.

They alleged: "Helen juga dengan angkuhnya memburuk-burukkan Yang Di-Pertuan Agung Tuanku Mizan dengan mempertikaikan kuasa baginda" [Helen also arrogantly denigrated the Agong by questioning his authority].

If anyone would care to peruse her article – which was published on Aug 4 in the CPI website – he would find that there is no mention or faintest allusion to the Agong or the rulers. How Perkasa came to its baffling conclusion on this purported instance of 'arrogance' directed at the Malaysian head of state is a mystery.

Perkasa Youth chief Arman Azha Abu Hanifah who made the report exercised another stretch of the imagination by claiming the content of the article was "clearly written with bad intentions" and "capable of creating tensions" and "a threat to national security". Arman has also made a similar police report on the article in his capacity as an Umno Youth divisional office bearer.

Utusan Malaysia and other Malay papers carried Arman's wild allegations against Ms Ang under such headlines as 'Perkasa minta polis siasat Helen Ang pertikai hak Melayu, Islam' and 'Perkasa lapor portal pertikai Islam' among others.

Evidently, Perkasa and their backers in the Umno-controlled media see everywhere threats to Islam and challenges to Malay rights.

This is not the first time that columnists writing for the CPI and other internet websites on issues of public concern such as religion, the Malay special position, the New Economic Policy, education, etc. have been harassed by the right wingers and those elements of our society inclined to fascism. It will be far from the last time.

Instead of engaging with writers in a rational fashion through reasoned arguments, Perkasa as well as the pro-Umno 'ultra' bloggers have seen fit to fan crude racial and religious sentiments. Their knee-jerk resort to incitement and instigation is sheer laziness and does them no credit. On the other hand, it only reveals the shallowness of their intellect and poverty of mindset on the important public issues facing our country.

Furthermore, the action to initiate the police reports is aimed at intimidating Ms Ang and other writers from exercising their right to freedom of expression in the national interest. The preference of Perkasa and their ilk is obviously to use the instruments of the state to censor differing views on contentious national issues.

The CPI would like to reiterate that the centre fully stands by the rights of its columnists and contributors to write critically and without fear on areas of key concern.

We call on the authorities to curb the extremist factions of our society who want to silence our independent intelligentsia. We also call on the public not to be spooked by these efforts to induce a 'chill factor' which will ultimately affect our public space and suppress our personal liberties.

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