

Stop The Intimidation, Institute Real Reforms Now!

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All concerned parties should evaluate with objectivity, the action of lowering a flag bearing Prime Minister Najib Razak's portrait by Legasi Mahasiswa Progresif (LMP) during its march for academic freedom, and call for the abolition of UUCA and not counter it with threats of intimidation and violence.

When Adam Adli, the undergraduate who took down the flag, went to Bukit Aman police station to lodge a police report in the company of coalition members after receiving death threats suspected to have originated from a political party, he was attacked outside the police station. Such an incident should not have occurred but what was utterly shocking was that the police took no action to stop the attacker.

According to news reports, UMNO Youth members could be involved in issuing those threats. However, if UMNO feels that the undergraduates' action of lowering a flag bearing Najib's portrait as inappropriate and insulting, then the Chief Minister of Penang YAB Lim Guan Eng should also be accorded the same respect from UMNO as previously, UMNO's hired guns have insulted him by burning and stomping all over his portrait.

In July this year, during the protest from Jalan Kaki Kelapa to Komtar, not only did the protestors trample on, tore up and burnt copies of Lim Guan Eng's portrait, they also assaulted the reporters who were covering the event.

In fact, not only did UMNO members vent their anger at Lim Guan Eng, Gerakan President Koh Tsu Koon's portrait was subject to the same treatment by UMNO members in September 2008. In allowing its party members to deface Lim Guan Eng and Koh Tsu Koon's portraits, and issuing such a vile and extreme rebuke to the undergraduates, UMNO has exposed itself as a hypocrite and practises double standards.

Even Deputy Minister of Higher Education Ministry, Saifuddin Abdullah, who was on hand to receive the memorandum from the graduates became a target of crude and vile insults by UMNO bloggers, who demanded for him to resign from his ministerial post.

The intimidation by UMNO bloggers is a clear attack by the ultra/conservative elements on the reformists within UMNO. Saifuddin should not be asked to resign from his post, as he is after all one of the few rare, progressive and open-minded Deputy Ministers in Barisan Nasional and I hope he will continue to be the bridge between the government and undergraduates.

Our undergraduates are becoming increasingly mature. Not only they are standing up for their rights but they know the appropriate time and place to table protests against oppressive and dictatorial polices that affect them.

If the response on the Facebook page advocating support for Adam Adli is anything to go by, the Barisan Nasional should just stop dreaming about curtailing freedom of thought and expression of our undergraduates, but instead take them seriously and institute real reforms in the education system.

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