

Malaysian Injustice: The Shoe Is Not The Issue
MalaysianMirror.com
18 April 2012
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If imam Hoslan Hussein could have had his day in court, he would have told us how donations to the mosque, amounting to several hundred thousands of ringgits, have been siphoned off. If this can happen in one place of worship, how common and widespread is corruption in mosques and how many millions, end up in the pockets of the few?

Instead, we are distracted by the shoe-throwing incident, which is not the real issue. The authorities have successfully distracted us away from the crux of the matter.

Malays who ignore the abuses committed in the name of religion give out mixed messages to the public; they fail themselves and the country. Is this what 54 years of independence have done to them? They are reduced to a nation of thieves and plunderers on one side, and a pathetic group of silent bystanders on the other.

Leaders corroborate with religious figures and both these groups abuse their positions of trust in order to steal from the people. Laws are enacted to silence us whilst the fear of God burdens us further. It is shameful that the majority shrug their shoulders and sigh, then carry on as normal, when told about the crimes which were committed by a handful of people.

The decline in our mosques and institutions which were once respected, like the judiciary and police, is because of our inaction. We allowed wicked people to commit theft and murder. Unless we react, Malaysia will remain a broken nation. We need to restore confidence in Malaysia but freedom does not come without risks.

A few days ago, imam Hoslan Hussein, who threw shoes at three Federal Court judges on 22 February, was jailed for one year.

Forget the shoe. The real thrust of Hoslan's message is corruption and abuse of power in mosques.

Hoslan's case, if aired in court would be potentially damaging. The court silenced him by rejecting his appeal; he was not given a fair reading nor hearing. Frustrated, he threw his shoes at the judges.

Instead of acting with compassion and mercy, the judges decided to punish him. This is a warning to others who may have entertained thoughts of highlighting similar abuses.

In 2005, Hoslan became the imam rawatib at the Ar Rahimah mosque, in Kg Pandan in Kuala Lumpur. Following his appointment, he discovered large-scale misappropriation of funds and started to catalogue a list of serious corruption and abuse of power at the mosque.

"I found that the amount we had in the bank was significantly different from what we had raised".

The mosque did not adhere to the syariah laws of the Federal Territories Islamic Department (Jawi) which prohibit people with political connections forming the mosque committee. In addition, Hoslan accused committee members of overcharging for their services to the mosque, and provided goods inferior to those which had been purchased. Accounts were not audited.

"Once they told everybody they had purchased a grade B cow for korban (sacrifice), but in the end what we got was a grade C one".

Hoslan reported his findings to the police, the MACC, an NGO and the Kementerian Wilayah

Persekutuan, but he might as well have not bothered.

Hoslan alleges that the 'pengerusi' had siphoned off funds, and that mosque documents were burned. There was an alleged payment of RM 3,250 per month, by a renowned restaurant, to a mosque committee member who had approved the restaurant's use of land belonging to the mosque, but the mosque did not receive any of this money.

Despite his detailed report, Jakim told him to concentrate on his preaching and leave the accounts to them.

In 2006, a new mosque committee, again with members loyal to Umno, replaced the old one and prohibited him from discussing the corruption issue. They evicted him from the mosque quarters and claimed that he had made breaches of discipline.

He reported his findings to the then Prime minister Abdullah Badawi's office but was told: "Tunggu dulu dan lihat."

Hoslan's allegations are serious, but his treatment is equally worrying.

First. Why was Hoslan's contempt of court not cited on the day of his offence? After hurling his shoes at the judges, they allowed him to go free. A few weeks later, seeing the public's support for the imam, the judges changed their minds. This smacks of revenge.

Second. On the day he threw his shoes, the Palace of Justice told the mainstream media not to report the incident. Why was this?

Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Hasan Ali, Harussani Zakaria, and the Malaysian courts all have one common trait. They are adept at diverting the rakyat's attention and have no qualms about using religion, royalty and the legal system to cover up their criminal acts.

It is laughable that Shahrizat wants us to forget about her family's abuse of RM250 million of the taxpayers' money in the National Feedlot Corporation scandal. She is distracting us by saying that opposition leaders failed to show respect to the Agong during his installation.

Now, we are falling for the same charade. We are being diverted by the story of the imam's shoes, from the real issues.

Decades of relative independence have reduced the Malays to a bunch of grovelling half-wits who fail to question, to reason and demand that thieves and rabble-rousers be thrown into jail.

At the very least, investigate the imam's allegations. Hoslan Hussein should not be jailed, but those who cheat and steal mosque donations should, along with the corrupt judges and politicians who conspire to cover-up their crimes.

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(The views expressed above belongs to the author in its entirety and does not represent the opinion of Malaysian Mirror in any way)