

Stop The Growing Extremism
MalaysianMirror.com
4 June 2012
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It was just a month ago that Prime Minister Najib Razak had called forth Malaysians to show a more moderate approach way to life and challenge extremism in all facets of life. In fact, in his keynote address in January at the International Conference on Global Movement of Moderates (GMM) in Kuala Lumpur, Najib Razak had announced proudly that "here in Malaysia, moderation has always been our chosen path."

Ezra Zaid's charge for an alleged religious publishing offense is a stark example that what is being preached is far from being exemplified in reality, and makes a mockery of Malaysia's quest to be the face of the 'Movement of Moderates'

While there are more pressing issues to be addressed, such as PKFZ, NFC of which millions of Malaysians' hard-earned money have been lost in corruption, the Barisan Nasional government seems to be more preoccupied with bringing a man to court for publishing a book that may have a differing view from the mainstream.

Ezra's arrest and charge last week exactly epitomises Najib Razak's definition that extremism is "a head-in-the-sand refusal to acknowledge the views and the values of others". In fact his Government is acting the exact opposite of what he advised the GMM, that it was time for the masses to stand up and say to the extremists "with a single breath a firm and resounding no."

We certainly support the call by the Prime Minister for moderation, tolerance and acceptance of differing views, especially in our multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious society. However, the sheer abandon at which his own administration defies his rhetoric proves only that there is no sincerely or political will to ensure the goals of moderation are promoted.

This will lead only to a failure in the GMM, the brainchild of Najib Razak himself, who failed to prove that he believes in the cause. The latest episode of clear cut intolerance only adds to the unrestrained attacks by UMNO-owned Utusan Malaysia and broadcast television to spewed messages of hatred to other racial and religious groups.

Hence we call upon the Prime Minister to withdraw the charges against Ezra Zaid in order to return Malaysia to the path of moderation, as well as to uphold the spirit of Article 10 of our federal constitution, which guarantees the right of all Malaysians to freedom of expression as set out by our founding fathers.

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