

**Building a harmonious Malaysia**  
**Malaysian Insider**  
**Feb 28, 2014**  
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I am a 60-year-old Malaysian who works as a church pastor. I went through the May 13 tragedy as a teenager and can still recall the terror we went through huddled in fear in our homes as we heard news of people being killed and shops being burnt. My prayer is that our beloved nation will never ever have to go through a similar tragedy.

It seems clear to me that there are a group of people who are determined to create fear and chaos in our country for their own devilish agenda. The actions we have witnessed since 2009 point to a concerted effort by these deranged groups of people who are doing their best to create a wedge between the races and religious groups. All the actions and words have a racial and religious twist to it.

The only way to fight these people is for ordinary Malaysians to speak up and rise up against all forms of racial and religious extremism. We must take back the public space and not let this small minority's views and actions cow us and intimidate us. We need to respond with calmness and firmness, not react with anger and descend to their level or fall into their traps.

We need to show and express mutual respect and help to one another as Malaysians, not as one race to another. We must learn to celebrate our differences and diversity, and promote unity in diversity. We need to avoid the temptation to label each other in racial or religious boxes and to discourage uniformity.

It is so alarming to see and hear seditious words and actions uttered and done publicly, and yet to see the lack of action and seriousness on the part of the relevant authorities to take firm action.

It is even scary to hear some people in authority justifying the unwarranted actions of some of these people.

It is now the responsibility of every peace-loving Malaysian to do our part to promote real muhibbah and do our part individually and collectively as families, religious groups, NGOs, civic groups, etc., to build bridges of trust and respect through words and acts of kindness; and respect and appreciation for each other in our daily lives, in our neighbourhoods and our work places.

The growing darkness in our nation can be overcome when each of us become a candle of peace and light other candles around us. I have always believed in these wise words which I read somewhere: "Do not curse the darkness but light a candle"

May God Almighty watch over our beloved and beautiful Malaysia and guide each one of us to become lighted candles that will gradually dispel the darkness that the misguided, evil-minded, small minority is seeking to foist on this nation.

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Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/building-a-harmonious-malaysia>