

Clarify or withdraw your comments on human rights, Proham tells Najib
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A human rights body wants Datuk Seri Najib Razak to clarify or withdraw his comments on "extreme human rights" which the prime minister had said was a new threat against Islam and Muslims.

Expressing shock at Najib's statement, the Association for the Promotion of Human Rights (Proham) said the remark raised "greater concerns" about Putrajaya's commitment to fostering human rights in Malaysian society.

In a statement today, Proham chairman Datuk Kuthubul Zaman and secretary-general Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria (pic) called on the prime minister to make a clear commitment towards a strong political commitment on human rights, democracy and good governance.

"As a nation we might have certain reservations on the basis of religion and culture but this must be clarified, justified and reasoned out in public policy discussions, both locally and abroad.

"However we cannot throw out human rights as if it is a new 'ism' threatening the very core and existence of Malaysian society," they said in a joint statement.

Najib in opening the National Quran Recital competition in Kuantan on Tuesday, had coined the term "human rights-ism" in calling it an ideology based on humanism, secularism and liberalism that was aggressively testing Islam.

Proham also said that in mounting this attack on human rights, Malaysia was in danger of isolating itself from the global community.

The body also said that the PM's speech raised fundamental and ideological questions to the very basis of human rights in Malaysian society.

"It seems to be a speech driven by political expediency rather than good governance and democracy.

"It is not consistent with Malaysia's international obligations," Proham added.

It also clarified that the standard benchmark for human rights is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the United Nations Conventions and instruments on human rights and that these were drawn up by the global community, including Malaysia, through a participatory and consultative process.

"Human Rights is not 'anti any religion' nor 'pro a particular religion or ideology' but founded upon fundamental principles and values that is acceptable across nations, religious traditions and cultures," the statement said.

The human rights body also pointed out that Malaysia was already a party to a number of such UN human rights conventions and that it has also played an active role in the UN Human Rights Council.

Notwithstanding this, Malaysia had also used human rights principles to advocate justice for South Africa, Palestinians and other Muslim minorities in South Thailand, Myanmar and the Philippines and played an active role at the Asean level.

Furthermore, Muslim majority nations, through the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), had issued the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights and had established an OIC Human Rights Commission.

Proham also noted that a majority of these Muslim nations, including Indonesia, had ratified human rights conventions in seeking to conform domestic laws with global human rights values and standards.

"The recent Universal Periodical Review (UPR) process saw a large number of countries calling on Malaysia to ratify the core human rights conventions. Some of these include the Convention of the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination (ICERD)," Proham said adding that the United Nations process gives the opportunity to countries to place reservations due to religious, cultural or contextual views.

DAP assistant publicity secretary Zairil Khir Johari, in condemning the prime minister's remarks, had described it as a twisted turn in the government's desperate campaign to demonise the "other" especially when Najib had warned that it was "retrograde" and that it rejects the values of religion and etiquette.

He said Najib's attack on "human rights-ism" is just creating another bogeyman to cover up Putrajaya's human rights abuses through the years.

"Never had I ever imagined that the values of human rights, which are essentially justice, equality and freedom, could be a threat to Islam.

"In fact, most Islamic scholars would argue that these are the very values that make up the foundations of the religion," Zairil had said.

He pointed out that while the complete lack of logic in the prime minister's statement completely baffles the mind, it is sadly consistent with the government's tried and tested strategy of creating fictitious threats to ensure the Malay community remains under siege. - May 16, 2014.

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