

Najib's 'human rights-ism' a bogeyman to cover up human rights abuses, says DAP
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Datuk Seri Najib Razak's (pic) attack on "human rights-ism" is just creating another bogeyman to cover up Putrajaya's human rights abuses through the years, the DAP said today.

The prime minister had coined the term when opening the National Quran Recital competition in Kuantan on Tuesday, calling it an ideology based on humanism, secularism and liberalism that was aggressively testing Islam.

"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," DAP assistant publicity secretary Zairil Khir Johari said last night.

There has been a wave of new Islamist groups protesting against human rights activists, saying the cause was incompatible with Islam, Malaysia's official religion.

Ironically, the government has set up a Human Rights Commission to look into complaints of abuses in the country of 30 million people. It has held several inquiries with recommendations sent to the Parliament.

The young Bukit Bendera MP described Najib's remark as a twisted turn in the government's desperate campaign to demonise the "other", especially when the prime minister warned that it was "retrograde" and that it rejects the values of religion and etiquette.

"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.

"In recent times, it has been the Christians, then the Chinese, and now, human rights activism, which have become the bogeymen to the Malays," said Zairil, whose father was the late Umno leader Tan Sri Md Khir Johari.

The first-term MP pointed out that such a proposition would justify the continued rule by Umno, which he called "the race's self-declared 'protector' against these so-called threats".

He pointed out that the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government had nothing to fear if there was nothing to hide.

"As the Malay adage goes, siapa makan cili, dia yang terasa pedas (whoever eats the chilli will feel the heat). In other words, only repressive regimes have reason to fear human rights because they violate them.

"Clearly, Najib's irrational attack against human rights is an admission that the BN government has, throughout the decades, suppressed ordinary Malaysians through the use of oppressive laws and policies that have denied basic human rights such as freedom of assembly, freedom of speech and expression and even their right to free and fair elections," Zairil said.

He noted that the prime minister's track record has been "muddy", saying Najib promised on "live" television in 2012 to repeal the Sedition Act.

"Yet, two years on, the law is not only still in effect, it is still being used by the government against its political opponents, most recently against the late Bukit Gelugor MP and DAP chairman Karpal Singh and now against DAP's Seputeh MP Teresa Kok and PKR's Pandan MP Rafizi Ramli."

He said apart from the Sedition Act, Malaysia still practised detention without trial through two new laws – the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act and the Prevention of Crime Act, after repealing the Internal Security Act (ISA).

"Another human rights problem that has constantly dogged the government is its dismal record on deaths in custody. Only five months into the year, already eight deaths have been reported.

"If the rate continues, it will soon surpass last year's tally of 13 custodial deaths," Zairil said.

The MP urged Najib not to shirk his responsibilities by "simply dismissing human rights as a Western demon that threatens Islam".

"This attempt to create a bogeyman in order to cover up his government's gross abuse of human rights is laughable when the whole world knows the truth," he added. – May 16, 2014.

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