

Ignorant hate turning Malaysia ugly
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COMMENTARY BY THE MALAYSIAN INSIDER

Is it a crime to like Israel? That was the main question posed after a Penang fifth former is being investigated by police under the Sedition Act for clicking "like" on a Facebook page titled "I Love Israel".

The student's action would have gone unnoticed except a teacher had shared the student's action on her Facebook page, where she criticised the student that led to more criticism and threats from other Facebook users.

There were calls to boycott the student, and one Facebook user commented the student should be burned.

So this is now a police case, with Penang police chief Datuk Abdul Rahim Hanafi saying the case was being investigated under the Sedition Act.

What is the crime? Since when did a "like" in the Facebook social network site become a criminal matter or drama in a school? Why is a 17-year-old being persecuted for what he does on Facebook?

"He is now living in fear for liking the page. He has since shut down his Facebook page and lodged a police report yesterday.

"The boy and his teacher had gone to give their statements at the Seberang Prai Selatan district police headquarters," said Rahim, adding that other teachers and students in the school would be called to assist in investigations.

As if police have no other work, they now have to look into what a schoolboy does on a social networking site? Must all Malaysians hate Israel and if they don't, they have to be vilified and be investigated by police?

What ever happened to encouraging debate or explaining to students that Israel

has oppressed the Palestinians? Whatever happened to teachers just sticking to what students do in class and not outside?

Whatever happened to common sense that a "like" in Facebook is not a police case nor is it a national tragedy or even an issue in real life?

Why is a schoolboy being investigated by police over such an issue? Can't he have his own thoughts on the matter? Are we a country where our hate is prescribed without explaining the reasons for it?

This ignorant hate is turning Malaysia ugly and this schoolboy is not the first to bear the brunt of such ignorance and hate.

The motorist named Kiki faced tough cyberbullying after her incident in Kuantan during the fasting month.

Did she deserve that treatment from her fellow citizens? Does this schoolboy need to go through a police investigation under the Sedition Act for liking Israel? What was his crime?

Perhaps his crime is not thinking like sheep, which Malaysian students have now become after years of rote-learning and listening to teachers on various issues. But it is these kinds of people that companies want – those who can think rather than those who just follow.

There are enough reports that speak of the ills of our education system, but this Penang teacher takes the cake for making a big issue out of a student liking Israel on Facebook.

There is no law against that in Malaysia. It is neither seditious nor criminal to like a country on Facebook, not even under Communications and Multimedia Act.

But what the teacher did just shows how ignorant hate has made Malaysia ugly. We hate people and countries because we are told to. And we don't have the ability to figure out or influence those who don't unless we use the law.

We have become an intolerant society where those who don't follow the majority voice are treated badly, or even investigated by police.

We have made ourselves exist only because we have social media accounts, not that it is the person that makes his social media exist. And now we have some teachers snooping on their students' Facebook pages.

Good, our teachers are now our children's nannies, not educators.

And our students must be sheep, not thinking Malaysians capable of figuring out life for themselves and that a "like" in Facebook is not cause for a police investigation.
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