

It's time to redefine Islamisation in Malaysia, former minister says

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**Zaid (left) said that top leaders have used Islam to absolve themselves of crimes.
— File pic**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 26 — Malaysians need to reexamine the role of Islam in the country, which in recent years has been skewed by politics and “propagandist,” a former minister said today.

Datuk Zaid Ibrahim said redefining Islamisation in Malaysia was everyone’s responsibility after the religion had been used as tool by “discredited politicians” over the last 40 years.

“Unfortunately, the Islamic way of life has so far been defined by those who are political propagandists and discredited politicians. They only speak about money, power, about enemies of Islam,” he said in his latest post on his [blog](#).

“A new and fresh conversation about the role of Islam in Malaysian politics and in public life is absolutely necessary; and every one must be willing to look at the subject again,” Zaid added.

Zaid said Islamisation had always been a part of Malaysia since its independence, initially because it was the official religion and later in the 1980s because the religion enshrined the universal principles of humanity, like honesty and integrity.

The religion, however, has since been used to divide the Malaysian people while leaders were left unpunished for their bad behaviour, he claimed.

Zaid added that top leaders have used Islam to absolve themselves of crimes such as by taking oaths to deny murder allegations or misappropriation of funds, in an apparent jab at Datuk Seri Najib Razak’s alleged links to murdered Mongolian Altantuya Shaariibuu and the contentious RM2.6 billion donation deposited into the prime minister’s private bank accounts.

“Today, after 40 years of Islamisation, the country is in far worse shape than before. Our people are divided, between Muslims and non-Muslims, between Sunnis and Shias, between Malays and non-Malays, between Malays and Umno Malays, between Umno Malays and the President’s Men and so on.

“We, as a country, has (sic) wasted many years talking about Islam but have done nothing to make us less corrupt and less greedy. In matters of integrity in leadership, and in state and corporate governance, we are also worse off,” he said.

Zaid said the time has come for “ordinary Muslims” to step forward and “define Islam as they see it”, claiming that the nation’s leaders have done nothing to help deepen the understanding of the religion.

He stressed that Islamisation can only be considered a viable option to move the country forward if and when the leaders take on the ethics and values of Islam such as honesty, integrity, justice and fairness.

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